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SEVERED SKULLS: THE SECRETS OF YORK'S HEADLESS SKELETONS
MEDIEVAL CHILDHOOD
NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES
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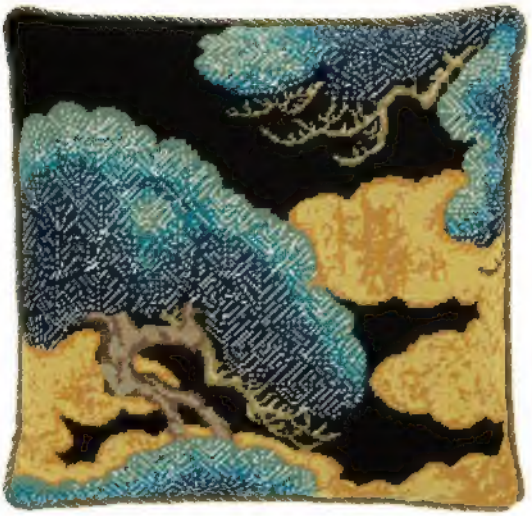

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V&A

Alexander Hamilton is having a moment. He has taken center stage in the American consciousness, thanks to two men: Ron Chernow, Pulitzer Prize–winning author and historian, and Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tony-winning playwright, composer, and performer. The two came together to create a Broadway musical about the "ten-dollar Founding Father" that brilliantly combines hip-hop with history.

At the heart of the show is the question of who tells a person's story after death. Chernow and Miranda owe a debt of gratitude to both Alexander and Eliza Hamilton for ensuring that Hamilton's story endures. Alexander's prolific writings left behind a massive record of his adult life: his thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Eliza curated and preserved this material after his death, a massive undertaking that took decades.

Aaron Burr once said, "Things written remain," but when letters are lost and writings are rare, finding the proper pieces to reconstruct a life is difficult, at best. Such was the challenge in recounting Hamilton's Caribbean childhood. Historians must search for clues everywhere: Inventories, wills, court records, censuses, and even headstones all can provide valuable insight into a person's life.

Everything leaves a trace. The trick is knowing where to hunt for it.

Amy Briggs

Amy Briggs, Executive Editor

PHOTO: TETRA IMAGES

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NO GOING BACK
The murder of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. was Rome's turning point on the path from republic to empire.

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"The Raft of the Medusa" combined art with politics, unleashing a storm of controversy in France in 1819.

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Found in 1904, a buried Viking longship held the bodies and belongings of two women. Was one of them a queen?

PHOTOS: YORK ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

FOR REASONS that are unclear, nearly half of the individuals had been beheaded, as the cut across the top of this neck vertebra shows (above). All the bodies found were males under 45, taller than average, and muscular—a profile suggesting they were gladiators or soldiers.

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MIGRATION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Genetic Secrets of the Headless Roman Skeletons

The remains of 80 soldiers—many of which were inexplicably decapitated—have revealed new clues about immigration during the Roman Empire.

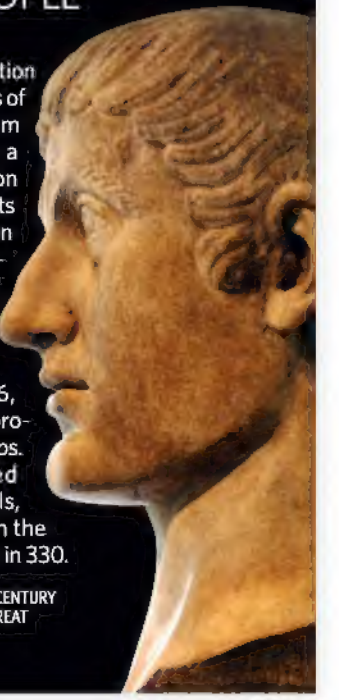
Documents have long shown how Romans were forever on the move across their sprawling empire 1,800 years ago. Now historians have scientific proof too: Studies carried out on headless skeletons in England reveal they belonged to people who came from all over Europe. At least one may have come to this chilly northern outpost from as far away as modern-day Saudi Arabia.

When archaeologists unearthed 80 bodies in the northern English city of York in 2004 and 2005, they were hardly surprised by the presence of human remains: The site lay on a burial ground of the Roman settlement of Eboracum. What did surprise them was that nearly half of the bodies' heads had been cut off. Many of the bodies

DOZENS OF BODIES excavated in 2004 from a Roman burial ground in York, England, are laid out in the city's Guildhall (above). Although it is still not clear why some were decapitated (above, far left), chemical and DNA analyses on bones and teeth have established that the skeletons belonged to people from diverse genetic backgrounds. These new findings will complement what is known from historical documents about the mass movement of peoples across the Roman Empire 1,800 years ago.

FROM YORK TO CONSTANTINOPLE

DESPITE ITS ISOLATED position on the storm-tossed fringes of the Roman Empire, Eboracum (modern-day York) was a lively, cosmopolitan garrison city. Recent research suggests that, in addition to European immigrants, some York residents were also of African descent. The city was the setting for one of the empire's most momentous events: Here, in 306, Constantine (right) was proclaimed emperor by his troops. He immediately headed south to eliminate his rivals, a struggle concluding with the founding of Constantinople in 330.



YORK'S IMPERIAL VISITOR, FOURTH-CENTURY MARBLE BUST OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

PRISMA/ALBUM

were found with their severed skulls resting by their sides.

Initial studies revealed that, of 18 skeletons analyzed, only 5 came from York. In 2010 researchers at the University of Reading published the results of tests to determine the levels of carbon and nitrogen in those skeletons—chemical "signatures" that reveal the geology, food, and climate of early life. Two of the skeletons in the sample, it was found, belonged to people who once ate a grain called millet. Since this cereal was unavailable within Britain, researchers concluded that many of the soldiers originated in areas of eastern Europe.

Going Mobile

The results of the latest tests published in 2016 reveal even more about the origins of at least some of the bodies.

Geneticist Dan Bradley, from Trinity College Dublin in Ireland, analyzed DNA preserved in the inner ear bones of seven of the York skulls. Of those, six were found to have DNA matching that of people living in modern-day Wales.

However, when the results for the seventh skull came in, it caused a sensation in Bradley's team: "The nearest genetic matches were from Palestine or Saudi Arabia," Bradley explains. "He definitely didn't come from Europe."

In addition to the DNA tests, Gundula Müldner of the University of Reading also analyzed the teeth of the seventh skull. Chemical signatures confirm the person came from "the Nile Valley or an environment like that," Müldner says. "We can't pinpoint it exactly, but somewhere in the Near East."

If the diverse origins of these ancient immigrants to York is becoming clearer, the mystery remains as to what they were doing there, and how they met their deaths.

Tooth marks made by an animal on one of the skeletons could well have been sustained in gladiatorial combat with a bear or lion. Eboracum was an important garrison city, so it is likely some of the bodies are also those of soldiers.

But why were so many decapitated? It is hoped this is one more secret the York skeletons will yield over time.

Caterina Sforza, Indomitable Duchess

To survive turbulent 15th-century Italy, the young Duchess of Imola and Forlì relied on not only the art of intrigue but also fierce military tactics to protect and maintain her ancestral lands.

A Life of Love and War

1463

Caterina Sforza is born, the illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, future Duke of Milan, and his lover, Lucrezia Landriani.

1484

Caterina defends the interests of her husband Girolamo Riario in Rome following the death of Pope Sixtus IV.

1488

Girolamo is assassinated, and Caterina marries again. She puts the interests of her new husband, Giacomo Feo, before those of her son.

1497–99

Widowed in 1495, Caterina marries Giovanni de' Medici in 1497. After his death, she faces strong opposition from the Borgias.

1500–1509

Following captivity in Rome, Caterina retires to a villa in Florence, where she dies at age 46 of pneumonia.

Toward the end of 1499, a woman stood atop the walls of the Rocca di Ravaldino in Forlì, some 185 miles north of Rome. The troops of the Borgias, a powerful rival family, were holding her children hostage and threatening to kill them if she did not yield the fortress and her lands to them. But she refused, and, pointing at her womb, cried: "Kill them if you will, I have the means to make many more! You will never make me surrender."

The tale may well be apocryphal but, given what is known about the extraordinary Caterina Sforza, it has a ring of truth about it. One of the most exceptional figures of the Italian Renaissance, Sforza rubbed shoulders with the artistic and cultural geniuses of her era. She defied convention, studied alchemy, and welcomed confrontation with other Italian families such as the Borgias.

Caterina was born in 1463 in Milan, the love child of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who, later in her childhood, would become Duke of Milan. Despite her illegitimacy, she was brought up at the center of her father's household, where she received an education imbued with the humanist spirit of the age. Like other females in this remarkable family, she trained alongside male children in military leadership and weapons usage.

In 1473, when Caterina was 10, her family made a political alliance and married her to Girolamo Riario, 20 years her senior and a nephew of Pope Sixtus IV. Lord of Imola and Forlì—a city south of Milan, in Romagna—Girolamo took his child bride to live in Rome after she reached age 14. The move helped consolidate their place at the center of the papal court. Caterina would give birth to five children and become a powerful intermediary between Rome and Milan.

Intrigue in Rome

In August 1484 Pope Sixtus IV's death caused political chaos. Italy's families jockeyed to put one of their own on the throne of St. Peter. Riario's precarious position was threatened by many factions seeking to seize his lands. Before his uncle's death, Riario had been away from Rome, campaigning against these rival factions, but now he was prevented from returning to the city to shore up his position. Caterina, despite being seven months pregnant, did it for him.

She commanded their forces to seize Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo. She refused

GOLD RELIQUARY FROM THE CATHEDRAL OF FORLÌ

DEA/AGE FOTOSTOCK

When she was seven months pregnant, Caterina seized control of Rome's Castel Sant' Angelo.

DEA/ALBUM

MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY FACE

RENAISSANCE ARTISTS were deeply attracted to Caterina. Sandro Botticelli is said to have depicted her as one of the muses in his painting "Primavera" (1477-1482). In Lorenzo di Credi's magnificent oil painting (left) the 20-year-old Caterina is portrayed with a beauty she preserved well into her later years. A book attributed to her, *Experimenti della excellentissima signora Caterina da Forlì*, suggests beauty and learning mattered to her as much as power. Recipes for skin and hair, and general beauty tips, combine with her commentaries on botany and astrology.

CATERINA SFORZA PORTRAIT BY LORENZO DI CREDI, 1483

to cede it, claiming that Pope Sixtus had bestowed control of it to her family. She would only hand it over to the next pope. She knew the cardinals feared her artillery and that seizing the castle bought time for her family to make their next move. Eventually, Caterina relented, and Riario agreed to leave Rome in exchange for recognition of his estates in Imola and Forlì, as well as his appointment as captain-general of the Vatican troops, and 8,000 ducats in compensation.

Caterina had the chance to prove her political skills at her new home in Forlì. After her husband was murdered in 1488 by supporters of the new pope, Innocent VIII, she acted as regent until her son Ottaviano came of age. She shrewdly implemented measures to win the sympathy of her citizens by lowering taxes, and winning over the friendship of neighboring states by forming marriage alliances through her children. She also took command of her army's military training.

New Marriages

A few months after her husband's death, Caterina secretly married Giacomo Feo with whom she had a son, Bernardino Carlo, a year later. The passion she felt for the ambitious young man proved to be a weak spot. She went so far as to remove her eldest son, Ottaviano, from government to hand control of the state over to her husband. She also put Feo's relatives in charge of the fortresses defending the city. Ottaviano's supporters did not approve and hatched a successful plot to murder Caterina's second husband in 1495. Showing her ruthless streak, the widow had the assassins and their families massacred in retaliation.

GIROLAMO RIARIO (second from left), Caterina's first husband, stands before Pope Sixtus IV in Melozzo da Forlì's painting (1477).

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

In 1497, at age 34, Caterina obtained permission from her uncle, Duke Ludovico Sforza, to marry Giovanni de' Medici, a member of the powerful Florentine family. She had met him a year earlier when he came to Forlì as an ambassador from Florence. Once again, her marriage would end in death, and she would be widowed: Barely a year after Caterina gave birth to a son, Giovanni (later known as Giovanni delle Bande Nere, a famous military commander), her husband Giovanni died of pneumonia in the middle of a conflict between Florence and Venice. Shortly afterward, Pope Alexander VI, a Borgia, set out to enlarge the Papal States by absorbing cities in Romagna, including Forlì and Imola.

LIKE MOTHER, LIKE SON

GIOVANNI, THE SON OF CATERINA and Giovanni de' Medici, later became a famous military leader. His nickname "Giovanni delle Bande Nere—John of the Black Bands" arose after the death of Pope Leo X, his protector and relative, when he added black stripes to his insignia as a sign of mourning.

GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI BY GIAN PAOLO PACE, 1545

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

Braving the Borgias

Caterina Sforza immediately began expanding her military defenses, improving her weaponry, and creating large stores of food and ammunition in case she was besieged. Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valentinois, stood opposed to Caterina who had taken up residency at the fortress of nearby Ravaldino, the Rocca di Ravaldino.

Son of the pope, Cesare Borgia was a powerful enemy, with major forces at his command. After Imola and Forlì fell, Borgia set about besieging the Rocca di Ravaldino on December 19, 1499. Caterina personally commanded the defense with the aid of more than 1,000 soldiers. She refused one offer of peace after another, even—as the legend says—at the cost of her children's lives.

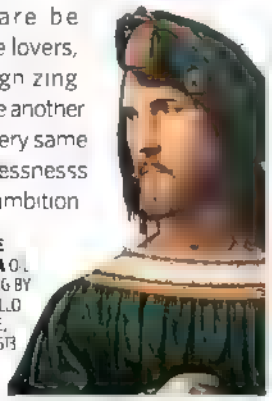
On January 12, 1500, after a hard-fought defense, Borgia's troops took Ravaldino, and captured Caterina. Although she asked to be placed in the custody of the King of

STANDING STRONG The Rocca di Ravaldino, the fortress where Caterina held out against the forces of Cesare Borgia, still looks formidable today.

RIC_ARDO_JA_AJNE/ FOTOSTOCK

TWO OF A KIND

"IF I MUST DIE, let me die like a man," Caterina Sforza said when Cesare Borgia's troops besieged Ravaldino. Caterina commanded 1,000 men and refused to listen to the offers of peace the pope's son sent. His response was to offer a reward of 10,000 ducats for her, dead or alive. Some accounts claim that the same night she was captured, Caterina and Cesare became lovers, recognizing in one another the very same ruthlessness and ambition



CESARE BORGIA OIL PAINTING BY ALTOBELLO MELONE, CIRCA 1513

DEA/ALBUM

France, Louis XII, Borgia did not want to relinquish his prisoner, because, some say, the two had become lovers

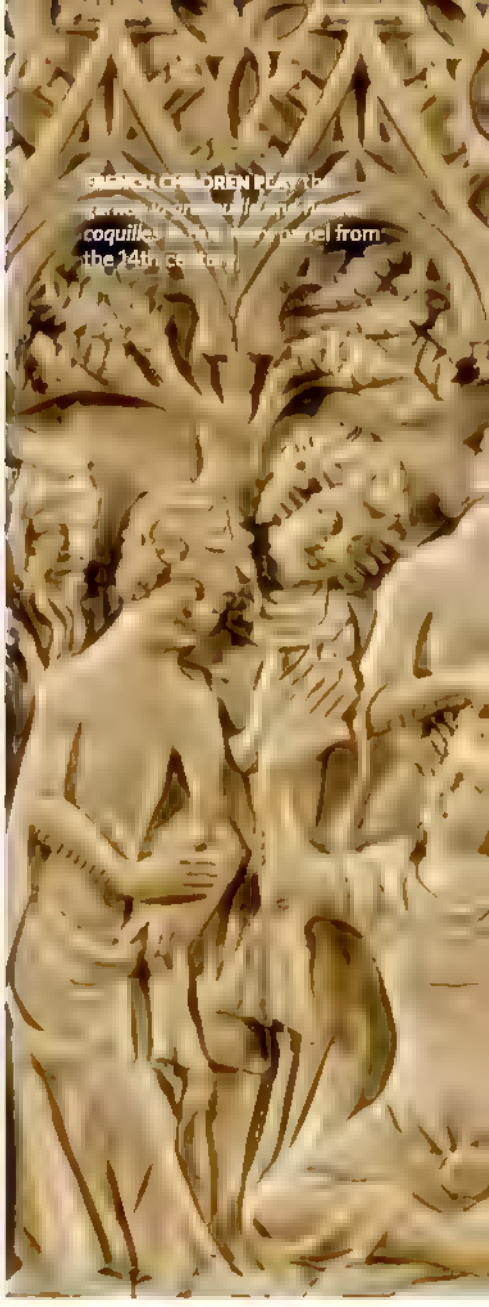
It was not long, however, before Borgia sent her to Rome, where Caterina was held by Pope Alexander VI in Belvedere, a beautiful villa near the city. The Borgia pope insisted on treating his prisoner as an honored guest, in accordance with her rank, but all the attention he lavished on her failed to quash Sforza's rebellious spirit. After an unsuccessful escape attempt, the troublesome duchess was interned in Castel Sant'Angelo, the fortress she had defended years earlier.

A Peaceful End

After the King of France interceded on her behalf, Caterina was released in 1501 and retired to Florence, taking refuge in the villa that had belonged to her third husband. It was there, following the death of Pope Alexander VI, that she attempted to reclaim her lands from the new pontiff, one of the great art patrons of the Renaissance, Pope Julius II. However, both the cities of Forlì and Imola objected to her return, and so she passed into the hands of a Vatican nobleman called Antonio Maria Ordelaffi.

Caterina spent the last few years of her life with her children, devoting herself to studying alchemy. In May 1509, when she was just 46 years old, she died of pneumonia. She was buried in the Convent of Santa Maria delle Murate, in an anonymous tomb, as stipulated in her will. Her grandson, Cosimo I, Grand Duke of Tuscany, later ordered a white marble gravestone be placed over her grave. In 1835 that stone was destroyed when the convent's flooring was renovated. Caterina, it seems, would not be contradicted—even in death.

—María Pilar Queralt



The Hard-Knock Life: Childhood in the Middle Ages

The scourge of infant mortality blighted Europe during the Middle Ages, but childhood was certainly no picnic either. Disease, famine, abandonment, and abuse were just some of the hardships faced by children who survived infancy.

From *Oliver Twist* to "Little Orphan Annie," the horrors and hardships of childhood are popular fodder for storytellers. But these recent fictions have nothing on the distant realities of children in Europe in the late Middle Ages (1300–1500), a period in which, even before the horror of the Black Death from 1347, childhood was often dangerous and brief.

Historians struggle to build a coherent picture of childhood in Europe at this time, in part because descriptions of child-rearing are scarce. In his encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum On the Properties of Things*, 13th-century scholar Bartholomew the Englishman endorses breast-feeding as a bonding exercise whereby "the mother loves her own child, embraces and kisses it." Historians differ as to whether such tender notions were the exception or the rule. Some question whether people in the Middle Ages understood the concept of "childhood" at all. The period certainly offers startlingly severe reflections on children, such as those of the Italian scholar Philip of Novara, who saw a child's affection for its carer as a survival tactic: "[W]ithout this, they will be so dirty and annoying in infancy and so naughty and capricious that it is hardly worth nurturing them."

Coming Into the World

Regarded as a married woman's duty, childbearing was highly valued during the Middle Ages, but from the beginning, children were seen as objects to be managed. French medic Bernard de Gordon's popular work *Lilium medicinae (Lily of Medicine)*, a medical encyclopedia completed in 1305, detailed common infant care practices. After cutting the umbilical cord, the newborn's nose, mouth, eyes, and anus were cleared, and the baby washed. A lead ball was placed on the baby's navel before swaddling, partly to prevent crying, which was regarded as unnatural and even demonic.

Boys received a warmer welcome than girls: They were less often abandoned, were entrusted to the best wet nurses, and breast-fed longer. No matter their

BRIDGEMAN/AC

THREE STAGES OF CHILDHOOD

"THE SIX AGES OF MAN" (left), a 15th-century French illustration, depicts different life stages for boys before adulthood set in at age 14: swaddled infant, toddler with a walker, and young child at play

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

For Crying Out Loud

IN THE MIDDLE AGES crying babies were not merely an annoyance, they were dangerous and linked to witchcraft. In a theological and legal treatise from 1486, the *Malleus maleficarum (The Hammer of Witches)*, the Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger linked infant crying to black magic. Many other texts speak of the demonic possession of children, whom malign forces turned into monsters or other devilish creatures. Unbaptized children ran the highest risk for corruption. To protect infants against evil spirits and diseases, amulets made of materials such as malachite were hung from their cribs. Newborns were tightly swaddled—as shown in this detail of a 14th-century painting by Giotto—in part to prevent them from crying. In Spain, in 1482, the chronicles record the death of the son of one Miguel Cortés, apparently killed by his wet nurse's husband. He was driven to this act, it was said, as he could put up with the child's crying no longer.

"BIRTH OF CHRIST" (DETAIL) BY GIOTTO DI BONDONE (1303), FROM A CYCLE OF SCENES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND THE VIRGIN. ARENA CHAPEL, PADUA, ITALY

AKG/ALBUM

gender, children were not typically registered with the authorities as newborns. Parents generally waited until they were one or two years old. Since so many died within a year of birth, many never made it on to the register. Although statistics on infant mortality are highly variable, recent research on English records suggests that just over a quarter of children died in their first year—even outside the period of the Black Death. A child who died unchristened, it was believed, would enter the state of limbo, a place between heaven and hell. For this reason, baptism of Christian children was usually performed on the day of birth.

Not all children were mourned or missed. Infants born out of wedlock or into extreme poverty ran the risk of abandonment. Children with deformities were sometimes seen as "monsters." Even so, many cases reveal other, perhaps surprising, attitudes. Examples abound of poor disabled children receiving charity from religious institutions. In 1257, when the disabled daughter of Henry III and Eleanor of Provence died at age three, her mother fell ill with grief.

The common belief that medieval children were less loved than those born in later eras is belied by moving accounts of parental grief. A boy in Oxford in the 1490s records how "a great while after my brother died, my mother was wont to sit weeping every day."

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

BONNE OF FRANCE, CHARLES V'S DAUGHTER, DIED IN 1360 BEFORE SHE TURNED ONE. MUSEUM MAYER VAN DEN BERGH, ANTWERP

About 25 percent of babies died in their first year of life. For this reason, the rite of baptism was usually performed on the day a baby was born.

Work and Play

Medieval childhood could still offer its moments of fun. Children across the social spectrum played with toys, including

Playgrounds of the Past

CHILDREN OF ALL SOCIAL CLASSES PLAYED games of one kind or another. Boys and girls sometimes played together. In general, however, carefully differentiated gender roles worked themselves into playtime from an early age. Girls' play was focused more on the home. They played with ragdolls and acted out domestic roles. Boys amused themselves with military games, clay soldiers, bows and arrows, and puppet shows. To the left is a portion of "Children's Games," painted by Pieter Brueghel the Elder in 1560, a fascinating social record of play in the Renaissance period. It depicts almost 100 different children's amusements, all of which would have been enjoyed earlier during the Middle Ages. Exactly as today, children copied adult rituals, playing at pretend weddings and christenings, for example. Some of the games shown, such as hoop rolling and knucklebones (a precursor to jacks) are less common today. Others, however, are still seen at parks and parties: leapfrog, blindman's bluff, balloons, and blowing bubbles. In general, toys were often made of poor-quality or discarded materials. If families wanted to give children special gifts they might ask craftsmen to make them, though such playthings were extremely expensive.

those described by medieval historian Barbara Tuchman: "dolls and doll carriages harnessed to mice, wooden knights and weapons, little animals of baked clay, windmills, balls, battledores and shuttlecocks." The kind of books given a child were often markedly moralist, such as Aesop's *Fables*. The dual aim of such books was expressed in Latin as *delectare et docere*—to delight while teaching.

Tutors taught the children of the wealthy. They learned grammar, arithmetic, geometry, music, and theology. Children from the lower social classes would have little or no access to education, although in the later Middle Ages educational opportunities in England grew following the Black Death in the mid-14th century.

The spread of such schools later enabled some children of humble origins to attain high office as adults. This was the case of Henry VIII's adviser Thomas Wolsey, believed to be the son of a butcher, who rose to become lord chancellor of England in 1515

For the nobility, the aim of education was less to enlighten through knowledge and more to prepare children for their adult roles. Sons received a military training: archery, hand-to-hand combat, and sword fighting. Daughters of wealthy parents learned conversation, dance, embroidery, and fashion. Female literacy was also encouraged so that women could read prayer books and administer property.

Sons of the less well-off might opt to learn a trade through the apprenticeship system that emerged in the late 13th century. A typical example recorded is that of one Thomas of Windsor, contracted to serve a brassworker in 1396 for a period of seven years. Thomas, then probably age 14, agreed not to drink in taverns, hire prostitutes, play dice, or consort with any female member of his master's household during his apprenticeship.

A Kinder Way

Although many aspects of medieval child-rearing seem cold, attitudes toward children began to soften and shift in this period. Based on the injunction in the Epistle of James that the "visiting of orphans and widows" formed the basis of a solid faith, the church had long provided care for abandoned or orphaned children. The late 14th century saw a surge in the provision of foundling hospitals in the increasingly prosperous cities. Barcelona's Casa d'Infants Orfes was founded in 1370, and Florence's Ospedale degli Innocenti in 1419. For all its disease and squalor, the late Middle Ages also marked the origins of a welfare system for children.

—Juan Pablo Sánchez

A FLOATING HELL. This preliminary sketch for Théodore Géricault's painting "The Raft of the Medusa," depicts the moment the starving castaways spot the ship that will save them.

Louder Than Words: "The Raft of the Medusa"

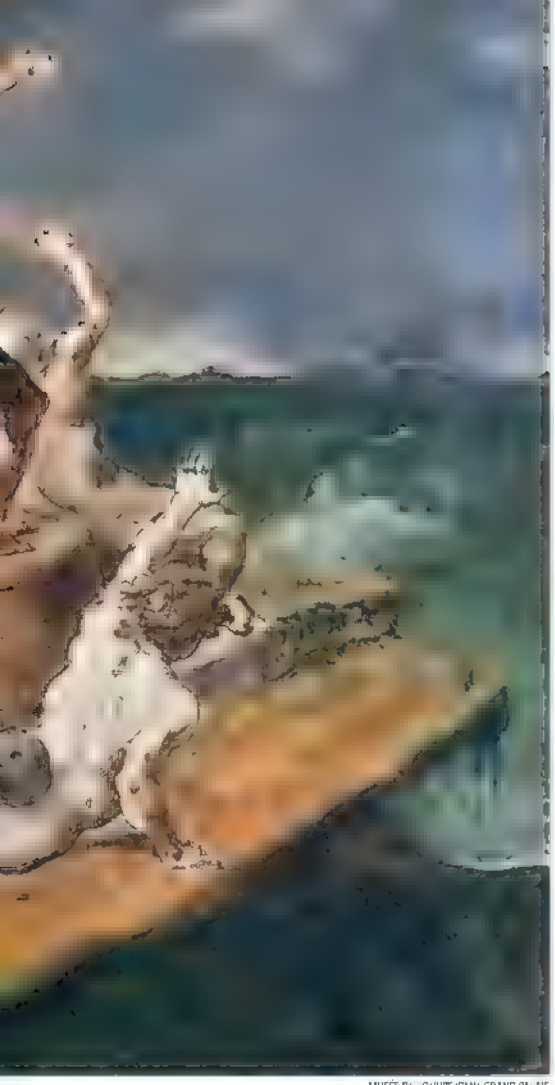
When Géricault's Romantic masterpiece debuted almost 200 years ago, it caused an uproar. This harrowing depiction of shipwreck survivors, now hung in the Louvre Museum in Paris, was seen as an attack on elitism and incompetence, and a potent symbol of the human condition.

Théodore Géricault was only 27 when he finished his monumental work, "The Raft of the Medusa." The horrific painting provoked political outcry and public soul-searching after its premiere at the Louvre in August 1819. Its unflinching depiction of starvation and death, as well as its underlying commentary on the political system that then controlled France, caused a scandal.

Géricault's work is based on true events that took place in 1816, one year after the final defeat of Napoleon. The empire established by Napoleon ended, and the French Bourbon dynasty had been restored under King Louis XVIII. The naval frigate *Méduse* set sail from near Bordeaux, as part of a flotilla headed for Saint-Louis in Senegal, where it was to carry out a vital mission for the newly restored royal government.

Ship of Fools

The French fleet's mission was to regain control of former African territories. The passengers included soldiers and civil servants, as well as several scientists carrying observation equipment. Also on board was Col. Julien Schmaltz, whom King Louis XVIII had just appointed as governor of Senegal. The *Méduse* was under the command of Hugues Duroy de Chaumareys, a former exile and



MUSÉE DU LOUVRE/RMN-GRAND PALAIS

ANDRÉ PALLIÈRE

THE RETURN OF THE BOURBONS

DISPLAYED AT THE PARIS SALON in the fall of 1814, this allegorical oil painting by Louis-Philippe Crépin celebrates Louis XVIII's return to France following the abdication of Emperor Napoleon I. He is surrounded by the royal family and a large number of former exiles. France is personified as a vulnerable woman, weakened by 25 years of revolution and war, who is saved by the Bourbon king, dressed in his coronation robes.

staunch monarchist. The fact that he had not sailed a ship in more than 20 years mattered little.

Captain Chaumareys's time away from the sea led to a series of fatal mistakes. He peeled away from the rest of the convoy and followed a solitary route. Ignoring more experienced officers, he misread the charts and ran the ship aground on July 2 in shallow waters off the coast of modern-day Mauritania in northwestern Africa. A storm followed, cutting short the crew's attempts to relaunch.

Nearly 400 passengers and crew abandoned ship, the chaos accentuated by the large amounts of alcohol consumed by captain and crew. Chaumareys and the officers boarded the lifeboats, leaving 150 sailors and soldiers, including a female cook, to huddle on an improvised raft measuring around 50 by 25 feet. The lifeboats were supposed to tow the raft to the coast, but Chaumareys felt it was too heavy and slowing the boats' progress. In yet another poor decision, he decided to cut the raft loose.

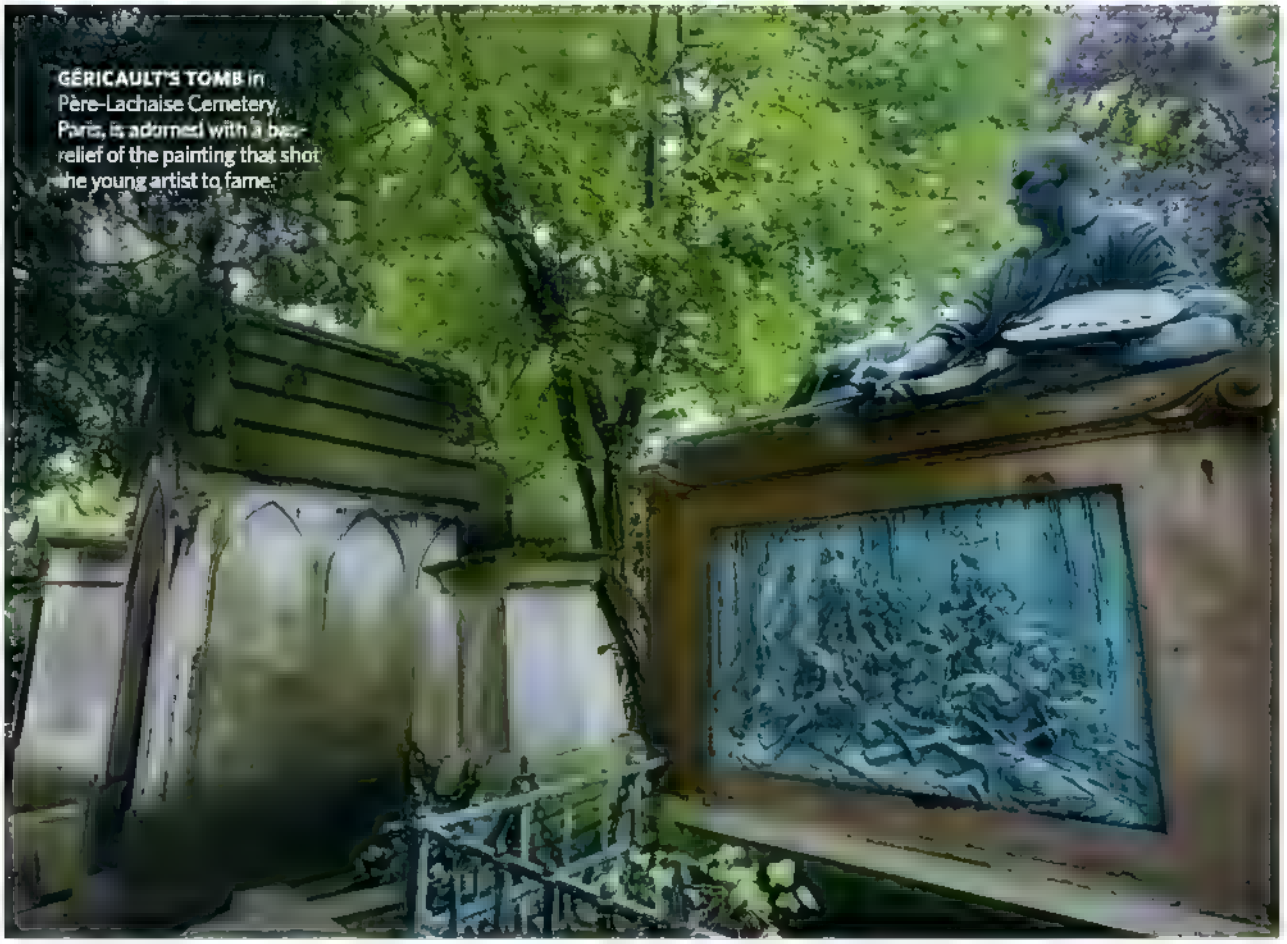
Abandoned to the waves, the 150 survivors faced a horrific crisis. Space was tight on the raft, with people struggling for the drier area in the center. Freshwater and food soon ran out. They had to drink seawater and even their own urine. The one box of biscuits on board was gone in a single day. By the third day, some of the crew were already resorting to cannibalism, the flesh from the corpses cut into strips and dried in the sun before being eaten. "We saw that awful food as the only way of staying alive," a survivor later explained.

According to personal accounts, the number of survivors was quickly whittled down. Twenty people drowned on the first night. On the second, a fierce fight killed at least 65 more people. A

Written by two of the survivors, a book about the behavior of the captain and crew of the *Méduse* triggered a wave of revulsion across France.

LIFTING THE LID THE COVER OF CORRÉARD AND SAVIGNY'S BOOK ON THE *MÉDUSE* AFFAIR

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE



GÉRICAULT'S TOMB in Père-Lachaise Cemetery, Paris, is adorned with a bas-relief of the painting that shot the young artist to fame.

week later only 28 survivors remained, many of them sick, wounded, and mentally exhausted by the ordeal. To enhance their own chances of survival, a group decided to throw 13 more overboard.

After 13 days, the last 15 survivors on the raft at last sighted their rescue. It was from the flotilla that had set sail with the *Méduse*, and which had already reached Saint-Louis. Chaumareys, who had also managed to get there in a lifeboat, had sent it back to try to recover equipment.

In 1817 two of the expedition's survivors, Jean-Baptiste Savigny, a surgeon, and Alexandre Corréard, an engineer and geographer, published an account of what happened on the raft, *The Wreck of the Frigate* Méduse. They denounced the captain's negligence and cowardice, as well as the atrocities committed by the terrified, drunken sailors. The book unleashed a wave of revulsion across France Liberal opponents of the Bourbon regime used the affair to denounce the restored monarchy's incompetence. The naval minister was forced to resign. For his ineptitude and indifference, Chaumareys was court-martialed and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

Painting History

Amid this indignation, a 27-year-old artist decided to immortalize the episode. Théodore Géricault had already won critical acclaim, but he had just lost a fellowship that would have enabled him to keep studying painting. He needed an eye-catching subject to relaunch his career, and what better than the *Méduse*?

Géricault set about his task methodically. He met two of the castaways and based his initial sketches on their accounts. He transferred from his studio

DYING YOUNG

CRITICISM OF "THE RAFT OF THE MEDUSA" convinced Géricault his work was a failure. He left for England, where he took up equestrian painting. After his return to France, he was commissioned by the famous psychiatrist Georget to make portraits of the mentally ill. The brilliant painter died in January 1824, at the tender age of 32.

SELF-PORTRAIT BY GÉRICAULT OIL ON CANVAS, 1808

History, Horror, and Hope
Completed in 1819, Géricault's great painting perfectly blends the authentic historical events with intense emotions.
An African man standing on a barrel waves a rag to attract the attention of the
A white dot on the horizon, the sails of the *Argus* are the survivors' last hope.
An exhausted elderly man holds the corpse of a young man in his lap.
The painting shows a total of 15 survivors and 5 corpses.

JOSEPH MARTIN/ALBUM

in Rue des Martyrs, Paris, to a much larger space in Rue du Faubourg-du-Roule. The move was necessary: He was working on a huge canvas, measuring 22 by 17 feet, almost as big as the raft that inspired him. Another survivor of the shipwreck, a carpenter by trade, was commissioned by the artist to build a model of the raft exactly as he remembered it during those infernal 13 days.

The artist placed great importance on the anatomical details of the bodies. The survivors, along with his disciple—the fellow Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix—and his assistant, Louis-Alexis Jamar, all took part in extensive posing sessions. Géricault made lots of sketches in a nearby morgue to capture the precise color of amputated limbs and the rigid quality of the corpses. He even convinced a doctor friend to lend him body parts. According to his biographer, Charles Clément, his studio smelled horribly.

One of Géricault's main concerns was his choice of precisely the right episode from the *Méduse* tragedy. He considered portraying scenes of cannibalism but feared that subject could result in the painting's being censored. In the end he selected a moment when the survivors sighted the ship that saved them, showing hope in contrast to extreme suffering. For eight months, from November 1818 to June 1819, the painter worked tirelessly. The only people he saw were his assistant and his housekeeper, who brought him food.

Succès de Scandale

The canvas went on display at the Salon in Paris, which opened on August 25, 1819. At first it was known as "Scene of a Shipwreck" (its current title, which utilizes the Anglicized *Medusa* rather than *Méduse*, emerged later). The painting caused an immediate sensation.

Despite its colorless, original title, no viewer could fail to recognize the story of the *Méduse*. Conservatives railed against the work's supposed artistic errors and the "obscene" realism of the scene, far removed from the models of classical beauty. Liberals saw the painting as a critique of the high-handedness of the new regime, reading it as a metaphor for the great national shipwreck of France itself.

The depiction of a black sailor, featured prominently in the center of the painting, also announced the painter's political commitment at a time when the struggle against slavery and the black slave trade was intensifying. Its mix of realism, drama, and theatricality made the work a benchmark for Romantic painting. As the critic Count O'Mahony exclaimed on seeing it: "What a hideous spectacle, but what a beautiful picture!"

—Dominique Kalifa

Mathematics in Ancient Egypt

THE POWER OF NUMBERS

Egypt's civilization rested on not only military strength but also mathematical might. Egyptian calculations and systems predated the great Greek thinkers by millennia.

BALANCING THE BOOKS

Scribes, like the one depicted by this seated figure from the 5th dynasty, used mathematics to calculate and record tax payments or temple offerings. Their writing instruments (opposite) were often made of reeds or wood.

FRANCK RAUX/RMN-GRAND PALAIS; OPPOSITE: SCALA, FLORENCE

SCALA, FLORENCE

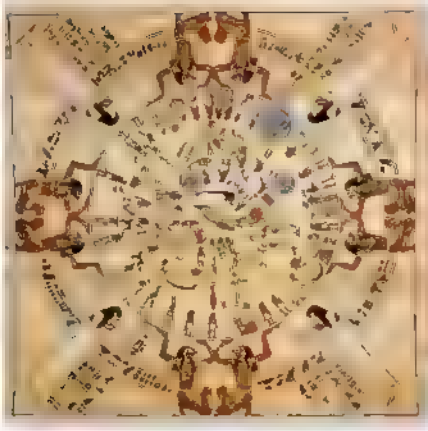
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Scribes, depicted on a bas-relief thought to be from the second millennium B.C. (left), were the ancient accountants who kept the wheels of state turning

Pythagoras, Euclid, Archimedes—to many, these Greek thinkers are the founding fathers of modern mathematics. But in fact, by the time these brilliant minds were working on their theorems, complex mathematical systems had already been well established across the Mediterranean for many centuries, and counting systems for several millennia. Mathematics was an engine for progress in the ancient world. Without it, a society could not collect taxes, keep records of produce, or design architectural marvels such as the pyramids.

In his travels through Egypt in the fifth century B.C., the great Greek historian Herodotus—known as the father of history—refers in detail to the long-standing accounting tradition in the land of the pharaohs. In the reign of "King Sesostris," for example, the country was "divided . . . among all the Egyptians by giving each an equal parcel of land [and] made this his source of revenue, assessing the payment of a yearly tax." If the Nile burst its banks, "the king would send men to look into it and calculate the part by which the land was diminished, so that thereafter it should pay in proportion to the tax originally imposed."

Historians are unsure as to the identity of this king—some suggest Herodotus meant Ramses II, who ruled Egypt some eight centuries before his Greek visit. Herodotus had no doubts that the Egyptian system of measurement and



COUNTING ON THE ANCIENTS

3250 B.C.
Discovered in Tomb U-j, vessels with numbered tags relating to the quantities inside are some of the first evidence of accounting

3000 B.C.
A mace head belonging to King Narmer, the very first king of the 1st dynasty, shows hieroglyphs denoting multiples of ten

WRITTEN IN THE STARS PAPYRUS COPY OF A CEILING AT THE TEMPLE AT DANDARAH SHOWING ASTRONOMICAL SCENES

AKG-IMAGES / BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

POLYMATH'S PYRAMID

The Pyramid of Djoser was designed in the third millennium B.C. by Imhotep, a minister, physician, and mathematician, whose calculation of angles and volumes was crucial in the building of this huge structure.

1950 B.C.
The oldest mathematical papyrus, the Reisner I, date to the time of Sesostris and features practical mathematical calculations.

1650 B.C.
The Rhind Papyrus is the most complete mathematical papyrus discovered. It could be a copy of an older text.

540 B.C.
Greek thinker Pythagoras establishes his famous theorem, which the Egyptians had formulated 1,400 years previously.

225 B.C.
Archimedes shows the volume of a sphere is two-thirds of a cylinder's, an idea recorded in the Moscow Papyrus 1,500 years earlier.

FOR GOOD MEASURE

Taking the form of a cow's head (above, right), the standard weight known as the *deben* sits on a scale in this painting from the 18th-dynasty tomb of Nebamun and Ipuki in Luxor

ART ARCHIVE

calculation had deep roots and that it strongly influenced later Greek thinking. "From this [system], in my opinion," he wrote, "the Greeks learned the art of measuring land."

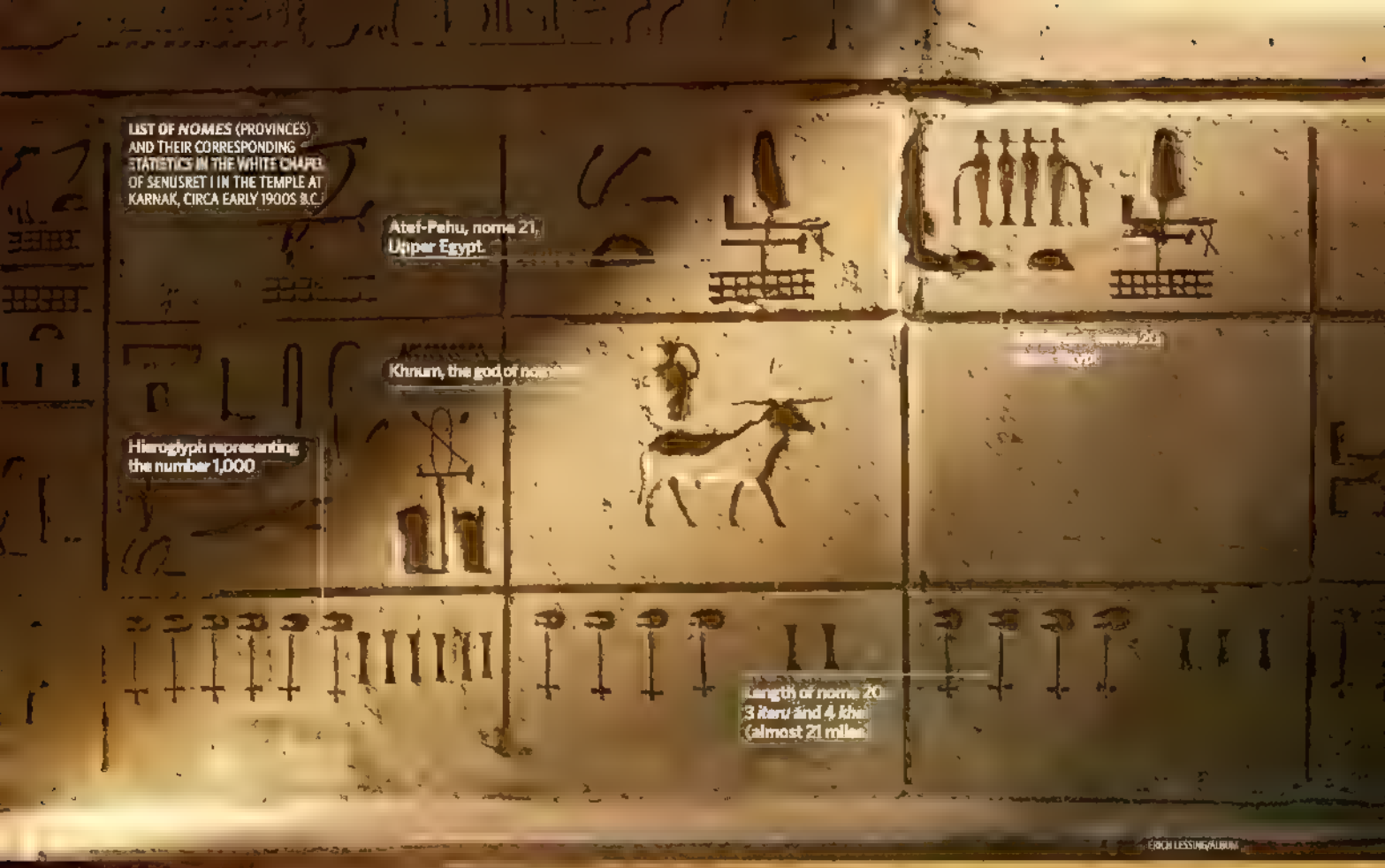
The Egyptians used geometry, algebra, and arithmetic to measure land, to estimate harvest yields, to determine taxation, and to calculate the offerings at the temple. Mathematics provided the foundation for Egyptian architecture. Calculating the dimensions of a pyramid or the incline of a ramp used to move vast building blocks required all kinds of complex mathematical operations.

By the end of the fourth millennium B.C., the Egyptians had their own system for counting. Many of the oldest surviving examples of hieroglyphic writing are not words but numbers written on tags. These labels must once have been used to mark how much produce, such as grain, was stored in a container. Similar tags were discovered in the Tomb U-j in Abydos (about 300 miles south of Cairo), dating to 3320–3150 B.C., the time before Egypt's dynastic system was established. Tags dating to around 3100 B.C. were found in the tomb of the 1st-dynasty queen Neithhotep in Naqada.

The Magic Ten

The numbering system that the Egyptians developed was, like most modern systems, based around the number 10. Hieroglyphs represent a single unit, then multiples of ten, and up to a million: 1, a single stroke 𓏺; 10, drawn as an arch 𓎆; 100, a coil of rope 𓍢; 1,000, a lotus plant 𓆼; 10,000, a finger 𓂭; 100,000, drawn as a frog or tadpole 𓆣; and 1,000,000, depicted as a deity with upraised arms 𓁨. Writing a number in Egyptian hieroglyphs is simple: The symbols are ordered from the largest number to the smallest. To express the quantity 11, one sign is used denoting tens, followed by one sign denoting units: 𓎆𓏺. For a higher number, such as 321,412, the same principle applies: first the sign denoting hundreds of thousands, then the sign for tens of thousands, producing the following numeral: 𓆣𓆣𓆣𓆼𓆼𓂭𓍢𓎆𓏺𓏺.

Although the Egyptians could, in theory, express any number up to 9,999,999 using only seven different hieroglyphic signs, there is an obvious drawback to this system. Each sign may need to be repeated up to nine times in a single amount. So, to express 9, the sign denoting 1 must be repeated nine times. To express 90, the


LIST OF NOMES (PROVINCES) AND THEIR CORRESPONDING STATISTICS IN THE WHITE CHAPEL OF SENUSRET I IN THE TEMPLE AT KARNAK, CIRCA EARLY 1900S B.C.
Atef-Pehu, nome 21, Upper Egypt.
Khnum, the god of nome
Hieroglyph representing the number 1,000
Length of nome 20: 3 iteru and 4 khet (almost 21 miles)

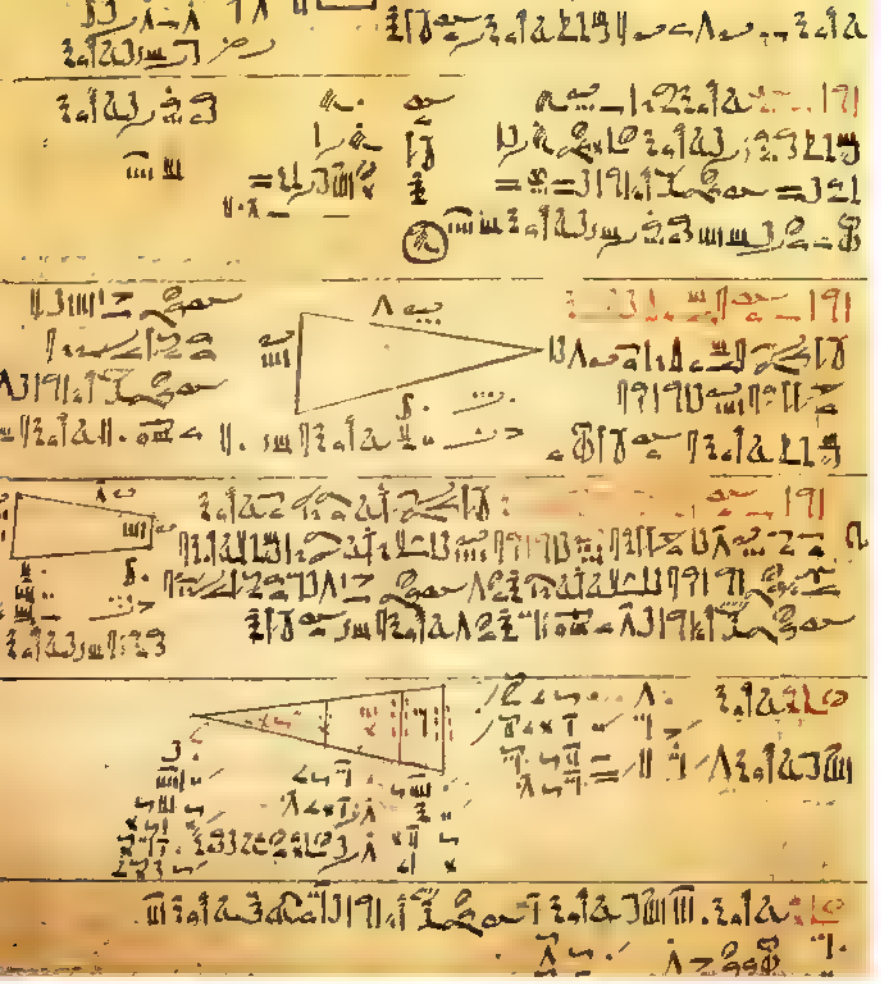
ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

A Simpler Script

Because mathematical symbols often had to be repeated many times in a single numeral, the hieroglyphic system could be cumbersome. In the case of 9,000, for example, the lotus symbol representing 1,000 would have to be written out nine separate times. Around 2900 B.C., the development of hieratic script, a cursive writing system, simplified record keeping and accounting. First, the design of the signs was less complex than formal hieroglyphics, making it easier for scribes to write quickly. Better still, signs expressing more numeric values were introduced. Hieratic script introduced unique symbols for units from 1 to 9, tens from 10 to 90, and 100s from 100 to 900, which cut down on all that repetition.

MANAGING THE ROYAL ACCOUNTS

This mace head belonging to King Narmer dates to around 3000 B.C. and is the oldest object yet found to show a precise numerical inventory. It is divided into three sections. The lowest of these is an inventory in hieroglyphic numerals of the livestock and prisoners in Narmer's possession.



AN ANCIENT TEXTBOOK

The Rhind Papyrus, now held in the British Museum, was copied around 1650 B.C., and features methods of calculating the volumes of cylinders and pyramids

DEA/M BUM

sign denoting 10 must be repeated nine times. Although expressing 999,999 would have required only six different signs, each would have been repeated nine times to create a row of 54 signs. This unwieldy system was partially solved by the development of an alternative to hieroglyphs, known as hieratic script. Used by state officials, this system had more symbols, so large numbers could be expressed with fewer signs.

Measure for Measure

In everyday life, it was vital to be able to measure length, weight, and volume using a universal system. The basic unit for measuring length in ancient Egypt was the royal cubit (about 1.8 feet) known as *meh niswt,* and written as: . The cubit was divided into seven palms, *shesep,* written as . A palm was further divisible into 4 fingers called *djeba,* written as .

These units were used for measuring relatively small distances, such as the proportions of a building or the height of the Nile in flood. The unit of measurement of larger areas, such as plots of land or entire provinces was the *khet,* written as , and equivalent to 100 cubits (187 feet). The *iteru* ( ) equaled 20,000 royal cubits, around 6.5 miles. The iteru plays a crucial role in the 4,000-year-old register carved on the walls of the White Chapel of Senusret I in Karnak . This register includes a record of all the provinces, *nomes,* of Egypt at that time, providing valuable information about the proportions of the Nile running through each nome with measurements given in iteru.

Math and Myth

Various measures were used to express volume, including the *hekat* ( ), which equals about 1.2 gallons. A curious blend of design and mythology is associated with this unit. To express fractions of a hekat, the scribes employed an ancient Egyptian myth, in which the god Horus lost his eye in a battle. The Eye of Horus, , was an important ancient Egyptian symbol, its constituent parts (such as the pupil and the brow) were used to symbolize a fraction of the hekat. If the Eye of Horus represented a complete hekat, the six parts which joined to form it corresponded to the fractions: 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32, and 1/64.

One of the most common weight measures was the *deben,* , equivalent to just over three ounces. A tenth of a deben was known as a *kite,* written as . Metals and jewels were weighed on scales calibrated to the deben, the weights often taking the form of a cow's head.

Although meticulous inventories were kept so that inspectors could monitor holdings of precious metals and goods, corruption was a constant cause for concern. The Instruction of Amenemope, a text dating back to the tenth century B.C. (which also has many curious parallels with the biblical Book of Proverbs), includes detailed prohibitions for civil servants regarding the falsification of weights: "Do not tamper with the scales, nor falsify the weights, nor diminish the fractions of the measure," reads one passage. "Do not make for yourself deficient weights, they are rich in grief."

Numerous papyri have been found crammed with mathematical exercises and problems, whose complexity leaves no doubt that civil servants must have been highly skilled at math. The problems are usually presented as a combination of operations, but no detailed answer is given. This suggests that students explained their calculations to the teacher orally. It is also possible that students memorized standard questions and their answers so that they would be ready when faced with a similar problem.

GEOMETRY OF WONDER

Giza's Pyramid of Khafre casts its shadow toward the Great Pyramid of Khufu, the last surviving ancient wonder of the world. Khafre's apex is precisely aligned to the cardinal points of the compass.

MATHEMATICS OF THE SOUL

The number, and type, of offerings made to sustain this 4th-dynasty princess's *ka* (spirit) in the afterlife are listed on the right side of this stela in her tomb in Giza

DEA/ALBUM

The Papyrus Anastasi I—a version of an original satirical text from the beginning of the 19th dynasty—provides examples of what a competent scribe was expected to know. One of the problems posed reads as follows: "You are told to empty a storeroom full of sand beneath your master's colossus, which has been brought from the quarry of Gebel Ahmar. The storeroom is 30 cubits long and 20 cubits wide. It consists of ten compartments full of sand. The partitions of the compartments are 12 cubits wide and 50 cubits high... How many men will be needed to empty them in six hours... so that the colossus can be erected on the site?"

Forerunner of the Greeks

A series of papyri discovered in the last few centuries reveal the complex achievements of Egyptian math. The most complete mathematical papyri containing these kinds of problems is the Rhind Papyrus. Measuring 16 feet long, it dates to around 1650 B.C., although it is believed to be a copy of a papyrus from 200 years earlier. It contains 84 problems including a diverse set of problems: division, multiplication, addition, fractions, square roots, arranged in sections dedicated to arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.

Of particular interest is the method proposed to calculate the area of a circle. In problem number 50, the value of pi is fixed at 3.16, a value very close to what is now known to be its true value (just over 3.14). Many societies of the Near East at this same time used a value closer to 3.

The Moscow Papyrus, which is some 200 years older than the Rhind Papyrus, is noted for its tenth problem. This question appears to deal with calculating the area of a hemisphere, and predates Archimedes—the mathematician usually credited with discovering the formula—by around 1,500 years.

The 6619 Berlin Papyrus (from the Middle Kingdom) contains just two mathematical problems but includes the oldest versions of what is now called the Pythagorean theorem and quadratic equations. Herodotus was not exaggerating when he pointed out the profound influence of Egyptian mathematics.

JOSÉ LULL
AN EXPERT ON ANCIENT EGYPT'S LATE DYNASTIES, J.L. IS SENIOR LECTURER AT THE AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA, SPAIN.

A NATION OF CRAFTSMEN

Excavating the Valley of the Kings required skilled technicians to make accurate calculations. These men were housed in Deir el Medina,

The Art of Measurement

In the tomb of the scribe Menna from the time of Thutmose IV (circa 1400-1390 B.C.) is a painting that depicts the measurement of a field. Menna 1 looks on while a kneeling figure 2 implores him to record a favorable measurement for the tax record. Various scribes 3 accompany the surveyors. To the right, a surveyor 4 pulls the end of a measuring rope while holding another two coils. On the other side, a fellow worker 5 unwinds the same rope. Following the first surveyor is a man 6 with two boys, members of the peasant family in charge of the field. A man holding a sheaf of wheat and a white cone-shaped loaf of bread and a woman 7 with a basket on her head are followed by a young man 8 with a donkey.

LEARNING THE ROPES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Egyptian surveyors were renowned for their skill at measuring areas using ropes. The great Greek mathematician and philosopher Democritus (fifth-fourth centuries B.C.) spent time in Egypt where, according to Clement of Alexandria, he was particularly struck by the skills of the Egyptian rope stretchers, known as *harpedonaptai*. "In the construction of lines with proofs I am not surpassed," he wrote, "not even by the so-called *Harpedonaptai* of the Egyptians." Egyptian fields were either rectangular or trapezoidal so that, by using geometry, the harpedonaptai could get an accurate measurement for each plot. They would then use these measurements to calculate the productivity of each according to its quality.

1. The Egyptians measured land by dividing it up into triangles. To do this, they are thought to have used a rope with 13 equally spaced knots.

2. The surface area of a whole field could be calculated using geometry.

RICHES OF UR

Leonard Woolley's excavation of Ur yielded an archaeologist's dream discovery: a series of intact tombs filled with a trove of golden treasures and untouched artifacts from one of Mesopotamia's most important ancient cities.

The 1920s marked a golden age in high-profile archaeological discoveries. Beginning with Howard Carter's landmark 1922 discovery of the tomb of the Egyptian king Tutankhamun, the decade would end with another stunning find: Leonard Woolley's discovery of intact Mesopotamian royal tombs dating back more than 4,000 years in the ancient city of Ur, located 140 miles southeast of Babylon in modern-day Iraq. The tombs were the work of the ancient culture of Sumer that had flourished at the dawn of civilization.

The discovery of the tombs dominated headlines on both sides of the Atlantic, not only for the quantity and craftsmanship of the objects found but also for the light they shed on the grisly nature of Sumerian burial practices. The finds included exquisitely crafted jewelry and musical instruments, as well as large numbers of bodies: servants and soldiers entombed alongside their dead sovereigns.

GRAVE MUSIC
Dating from 2600–2300 B.C., this decorative bull's head of gold and lapis lazuli adorned a lyre discovered in the tomb of Queen Puabi in Ur.
PENN MUSEUM

LEONARD WOOLLEY CAREFULLY REMOVES THE EARTH FROM A VOTIVE FIGURINE DISCOVERED DURING THE EXCAVATIONS AT UR.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

HAMMERED GOLD HELMET OF KING MESKALAMDUG ▲
SCALA, FLORENCE

SCEPTER OF GOLD AND LAPIS LAZULI ▶
ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

A DOZEN YEARS OF PATIENCE

British archaeologist Leonard Woolley was charged with excavating the Sumerian city of Ur (in modern-day Iraq) from 1922 to 1934. The 12 years spent meticulously digging down through the strata were rewarded by the discovery of a royal necropolis from the third millennium B.C.

1922–23
Leonard Woolley arrives in Ur to begin excavations, focusing on the area around the ziggurat. The remains of streets and buildings are uncovered.

1925
As well as excavating the ziggurat, Woolley unearths the temple of the moon god Nanna and other structures from the reigns of Shulgi and Ur-Nammu.

Epic Exploration

Scholarly and public fascination with the ancient culture of Mesopotamia had been steadily growing since the latter part of the 19th century. It was in December 1872 that an Assyriologist, George Smith, presented a paper to a packed session of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, attended by the British prime minister, William Gladstone. What he unveiled in his lecture caused an international sensation.

Smith had been deciphering a series of clay tablets from the Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh, a text today known as the Epic of Gilgamesh, regarded as the world's oldest known literary work. In this saga, he came upon an account of a flood that was strikingly similar to that of the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament.

The Epic of Gilgamesh is thought to have been written around 2100 B.C., predating the Hebrew Scriptures. Newspapers were quick to take up the story of Smith's work, fueling public interest in the Mesopotamian era. Museums and universities in France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States launched archaeological expeditions to seek the vestiges of the civilizations of Sumer, Assyria, and Babylonia, the regions where the first cities in history developed. Among the sites picked for detailed exploration was Tell al Muqayyar—better known today as Ur.

Ur had already been identified some years earlier, thanks to basic excavations carried out in 1853 by the British diplomat J. E. Taylor. Nearly another 70 years passed before a major project was launched to more fully excavate the ancient city. The Penn Museum and the British Museum jointly organized an expedition and chose veteran Leonard Woolley to supervise the dig.

After having led a dig in Turkey that included the future Lawrence of Arabia, Woolley worked as a British spy in World War I.

▲ **CHOKER** OF GOLD, LAPIS LAZULI, AND CARNELIAN FOUND IN THE TOMB OF QUEEN PUABI
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

◀ **NECKLACE** OF CARNELIAN AND LAPIS LAZULI WITH GOLD PENDANTS
DEA/SCALA, FLORENCE

RAM FASHIONED FROM GOLD AND LAPIS LAZULI ▶
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

▲ **FEMALE HEAD** FOUND IN THE HOUSE OF THE PRIESTS OF NANNA
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

1926
Beyond the temple area the team discovers a huge cemetery with more than 600 tombs. One of these is believed to belong to King Meskalamdug.

1927
Woolley's team discovers 16 royal tombs. Among them is the tomb of Queen Puabi, and below that, the tomb of her husband, an unidentified king of Ur.

1928
Leonard Woolley locates another tomb, dubbed the Great Death Pit. It contains the remains of 74 people, sacrificed to be buried next to their monarchs.

1934
The University of Pennsylvania is forced to bring the excavation to an end, partly as a result of the Great Depression. Woolley publishes a study of the site.

Having trained at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford as assistant to Arthur Evans—who had made his name excavating the Cretan city of Knossos—one of Woolley's first major digs was in 1912 at the ancient Hittite site of Carchemish, located in Turkey along the Syrian border. There, he was assisted by Thomas Edward Lawrence—later known as Lawrence of Arabia—until the outbreak of World War I stalled their work.

During hostilities, Woolley was employed by British intelligence in the Middle East when Turkish forces captured and held him prisoner for two years. After the war, he directed a dig in Egypt at Tell el Armana, site of the pharaoh Akhenaten's capital city. It was there, in 1922, that he received the commission to direct the excavation at Ur.

A Golden Mystery

For the first four seasons at Ur, Woolley concentrated on the area around the ziggurat, or temple tower. This structure was a stepped pyramid, erected during the third dynasty of Ur, around 2000 B.C. Archaeologists have linked this ziggurat to the ruler Ur-Nammu, who built many ziggurats at other Mesopotamian sites.

As the team excavated around the temple, small pieces of gold were surfacing. Even though Woolley realized that tombs full of more riches must be located nearby, he refused to let the expedition descend into a mere treasure hunt. In line with good archaeological practice, he continued systematically studying the different strata at the site in order to establish a definitive time line.

Woolley had another reason to be circumspect: Since the dig had started, artifacts, especially golden ones, were going missing, presumably stolen by members of the team. Before any attempt to unearth the tombs could be made, Woolley needed to be sure their contents would be safe, both from theft and inexperience. Woolley knew his team was still too green to be trusted with the delicate artifacts they might find in these undisturbed sites. Finally, in 1926, Woolley

WORSHIPPING THE MOON

This votive plaque (below) shows acolytes paying homage to Nanna, the Mesopotamian god of the moon. Woolley's team discovered this tablet in the giparu, the building in Ur where Nanna's priests lived.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

HIDDEN IDENTITIES

THE MYSTERY MONARCHS OF UR

Leonard Woolley excavated 16 tombs that he identified as royal because of the lavish grave goods found there as well as evidence of mass human sacrifice. The exact nature of the relationship between the main occupant of the chambers and their entourage is, however, not entirely clear.

In most cases, the "royal" figures have not been identified. In fact, only two royal bodies can be identified with any certainty. One is Queen Puabi in tomb PG800, who was identified by the seal found near her body. The excavations in the necropolis did bring to light various inscriptions, although they have not been matched to specific tombs. These writings identify Ur-Pabilsag who reigned around the period 2600–2450 B.C., Meskalamdug, his son Mesannepadda, and his sons A'anepada and Meski'ag-Nanna, who ruled sometime between the years 2450 and 2300 B.C. During this period the city-state model was consolidated in Sumer. Ur, its capital, imposed its dominance over the region.

THE RISE OF CITY-STATES

In the third millennium B.C. clusters of city-states sprung up in the river valleys of Mesopotamia. Sumer, of which Ur was the capital, later fell under the sway of neighboring Akkad.

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believed he and his staff were ready. The excavation could begin.

Stranger Than Fiction

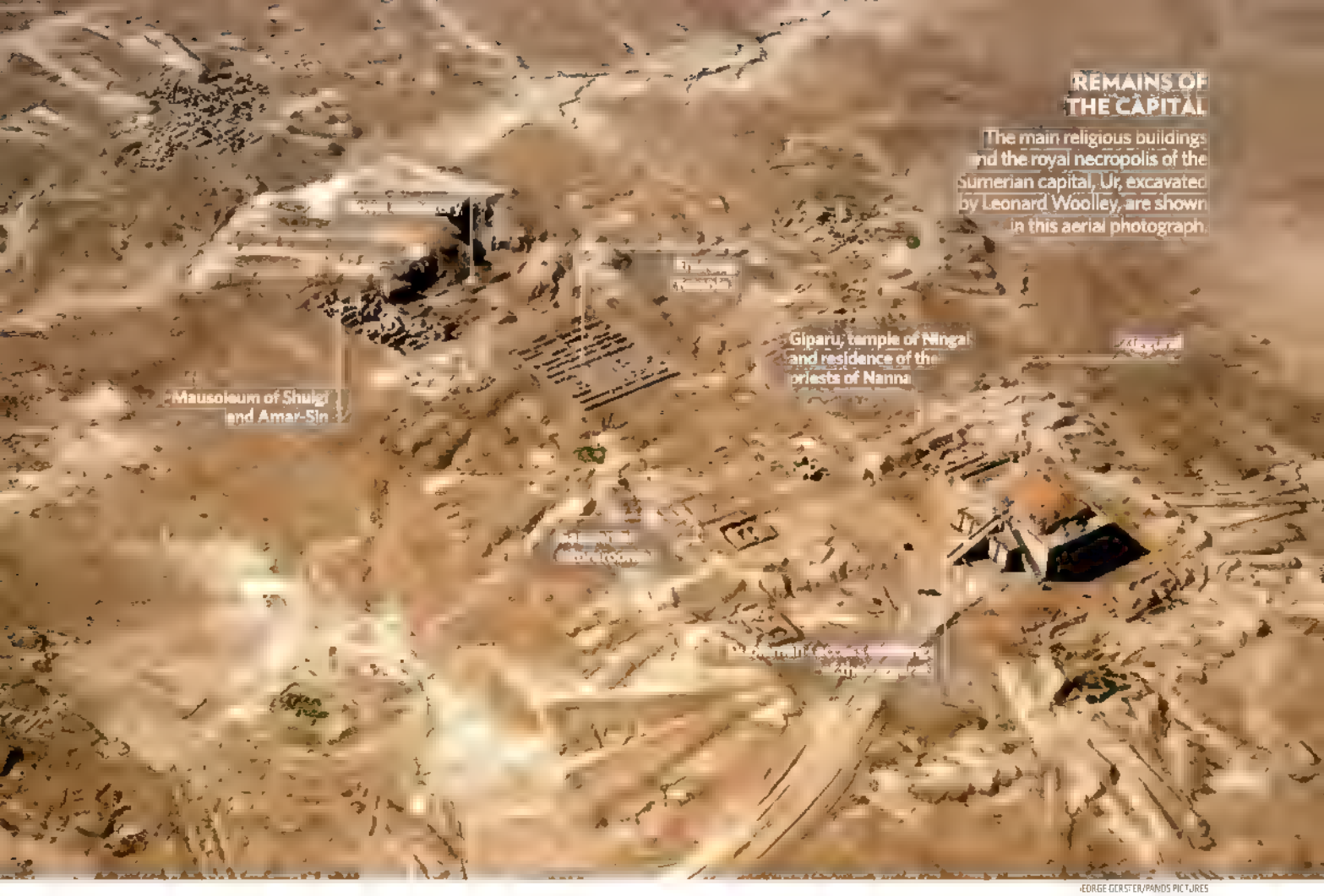
By the time the hunt for the tombs began, Woolley had been joined by the young archaeologist Max Mallowan, whose future wife—the best-selling author Agatha Christie—met him on the dig in Ur. Christie often traveled to the Middle East to visit Mallowan, whom she would marry in 1930. In the course of these visits, she got to know Woolley. Her exposure to archaeology influenced her; several of her whodunits take place on and around archaeology sites—most notably her 1936 thriller, *Murder in Mesopotamia*.

The royal tombs were all given names beginning with the letters "PG," which stands for "private grave."

During the digging season of 1926–27, Woolley and Mallowan had uncovered hundreds of tombs from the city's necropolis. At first only human remains and a few grave goods were unearthed, certainly not the riches they had been anticipating. But then, toward the end of the season, they made a spectacular find. Hidden among some bronze weapons was a magnificent gold dagger with a lapis lazuli handle. Next to it, a gold sack contained a set of musical instruments also made of gold. Never before had objects of such value and artistic quality been found at a Sumerian site.

Cuneiform inscriptions found on some artifacts established that they had unearthed the tomb of one Meskalamdug, who was certainly a rich noble, some believe even a king. The discovery caused a frenzy among the workers, who seemed to dig up valuable new artifacts everywhere they excavated. To Woolley's alarm, rumors started to circulate of fabulous hidden riches.

In his reports, Woolley recounts how he went immediately to see the region's tribal chief,



REMAINS OF THE CAPITAL

The main religious buildings and the royal necropolis of the Sumerian capital, Ur, excavated by Leonard Woolley, are shown in this aerial photograph.

GEORGE GERSTER/PANOS PICTURES

Munshid ibn Hubaiyib, to ask for his word that none of the workers would touch the site in Woolley's absence. The pact seems to have held fast during that dig. In the three seasons that followed, not one of the sites was entered without authorization from Woolley, and none of the magnificent finds were taken.

On finding an underground chamber made of stone, expectations ran high. Woolley suspected it could be the tomb of a royal figure. As they continued to excavate, the team uncovered a tunnel dating to a later time. The tunnel ran almost from surface level down to the ceiling. It was a sign that someone, perhaps thieves, had entered the tomb centuries before. It was a major disappointment to the team, which had hoped to find the grave unmolested.

The Queen's Grave

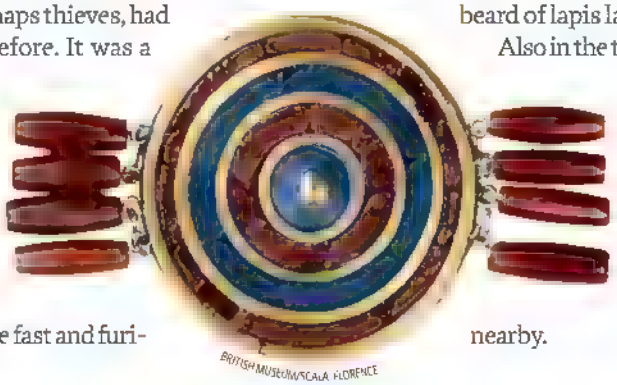
Work continued, and Woolley's efforts would be rewarded with the discovery of PG800, a pristine burial. The discoveries came fast and furious. Digging in the so-called Death Pit area of the tomb, the archaeologists discovered five bodies, adorned with grave goods, lying together on rush matting. A few yards away, they found ten more bodies. These were women wearing ornaments of gold and precious stones.

These carefully arranged cadavers also held musical instruments. Beside them were the remains of a musician who held a stunning lyre. The sound box of the instrument was incrusted with carnelian, lapis lazuli, and mother-of-pearl. On its wooden frontpiece was mounted the stunning golden head of a bull with eyes and beard of lapis lazuli.

Also in the tomb were the remains of a wooden carriage decorated with gold, precious stones, and mother-of-pearl, and sculpted heads of lions and bulls. Beside it were the skeletons of two men who had presumably accompanied the vehicle and the two oxen, whose remains lay on the floor nearby.

A CROWN FOR THE DEAD

Among the many human remains in the royal cemetery, Woolley uncovered the bones of a boy at the bottom of a funerary shaft. This headpiece (below), made of gold, carnelian, and lapis lazuli, was still resting on the child's forehead.



BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Built around 2000 B.C., when Ur was the capital of a Mesopotamian empire, the ziggurat housed a shrine to the moon god Nanna on its summit. A three-tier mass of mud bricks, the structure has been restored several times during its long history.

Public Domain

TENSIONS ON THE DIG

A WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD

Woolley was assisted at Ur by Katharine Keeling, who later became his wife. Her presence at the site was regarded as unseemly by Woolley's superiors. In 1926 the director of the Penn Museum, C. B. Gordon, wrote to Woolley: "Tourists and others returning from Iraq and Palestine make [the expedition at Ur] an important part of their recollections . . . Perhaps the presence of a lone woman with four men in camp makes a more interesting figure for some of them than the outline of ziggurats. In any case I should be a little apprehensive that a woman in that situation might incur the risk of becoming the subject of inconsiderate remarks . . . Perhaps you will wish to give the matter your best consideration with a view to removing that risk." Despite this shot across the bow, Woolley ensured that Keeling continued working at Ur. In the course of the project, she fulfilled an essential role as an archaeologist and restorer.

FAITHFUL TO THE END

Woolley and his team (above) pose in one of the last of the Ur tombs, excavated during the 1933–34 season. In just two months the workers removed some 140,000 square feet of earth and dug down nearly 60 feet.

As the dig progressed, Woolley came upon yet more treasures in the tomb: weapons, tools, numerous vessels of bronze, silver, gold, lapis lazuli, and alabaster—even a gaming table. In the center of the space lay an enormous wooden chest, several yards long, which had probably been used to store garments and other offerings that had long since rotted away.

Inside the burial chamber itself lay the body of a woman on top of a funeral bier. She was covered with amulets and jewelry made of gold and precious stones. Her elaborate headdress was made of 20 gold leaves, lapis lazuli and carnelian beads, as well as a large golden comb. Near the body lay a cylinder seal that bore an inscription from which the archaeologists were able to identify the woman: Queen Puabi (in his notes, Woolley referred to her as Shub-ad because of a mistranslation). The seal made no mention of her husband, which led some to believe she could have been a queen in her own right. Alongside Puabi lay the bodies of two of her servants. In addition to her treasures and servants, Puabi was interred with her makeup, including a silver box that contained kohl, a black pigment used as eyeliner.

When the archaeologists pulled back the heavy wooden chest inside the tomb, they found a large hole. Amid huge anticipation they climbed through and dropped down into a large chamber below. On excavation, the patterns of burial and ritual in this tomb appeared to be similar to that of the queen's above.

On the ramp leading into the chamber, they passed the bodies of six soldiers, laid out in two rows. Inside the chamber itself were two carriages, each pulled by three oxen, and beside them the bodies of the carriage drivers. At the back of the chamber the bodies of nine women

Archaeologists believe spears and axes, not daggers, were Sumerian soldiers' primary weapons.

GOLD DAGGER WITH LAPIS LAZULI HANDLE AND SHEATH, FOUND IN UR

SCALA, FLORENCE

BRITISH MUSEUM / ALA... DANCE

lay, all richly ornamented, with their heads resting against the wall. In a gallery running parallel to the burial chamber were more women, along with numerous armed soldiers arranged in rows.

Woolley deduced that PG800 and the tomb below it, which he called PG789, housed the bodies of Queen Puabi and her husband, respectively. The man must have died first and been buried in the lower chamber. Then, when his consort Puabi died, it seems that the workers who constructed her tomb robbed the one below, concealing the hole they had made with the heavy chest. The quantity of treasure uncovered in these tombs was so great that when Woolley informed his colleagues of the finds by telegram, he did so in Latin, hoping that his erudite encryption would keep the secret safe.

Gruesome Rituals

The archaeologists' discoveries revealed much about royal Sumerian burial rituals. There could be no doubt that the Sumerians practiced human sacrifice: Twenty-five sacrificed bodies were found in the tomb of Queen Puabi and 75 in the tomb of her husband. Another chamber dubbed the Great Death Pit, tomb PG1237, contained 74 bodies . Many theorize that these people poisoned themselves before burial, but some bodies bear evidence of trauma. By the end of the dig Woolley had enough evidence to describe in some detail the macabre funeral rites of the kings and queens of ancient Ur.

In addition to the 16 royal tombs, Woolley excavated about 600 minor graves, which enabled scholars to date the tombs to as early as 2600–2300 B.C. In contrast with earlier digs in which irreversible damage was often done to sites on the whim of the director, Woolley's excavations were meticulous. His discoveries had profound repercussions for the way that ancient Mesopotamia was, and is, regarded. The complexity of the site, presence of royal figures, and evidence of human sacrifice pointed to a complex political and religious culture, giving rise to a passionate debate about life in that remote era.

MANUEL MOLINA MARTOS
AN EXPERIENCED ASSYRIOLOGIST MOLINA IS A RESEARCH PROFESSOR AT THE COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (CSIC) MADRID, SPAIN.

WAR, PEACE, AND SACRIFICE

Known as the Standard of Ur, this box is held at the British Museum. It depicts scenes of peace on one side (above) and war on the other. It was found in a royal tomb near the body of a sacrificed man

THE GOLDEN TREASURES OF QUEEN PUABI

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

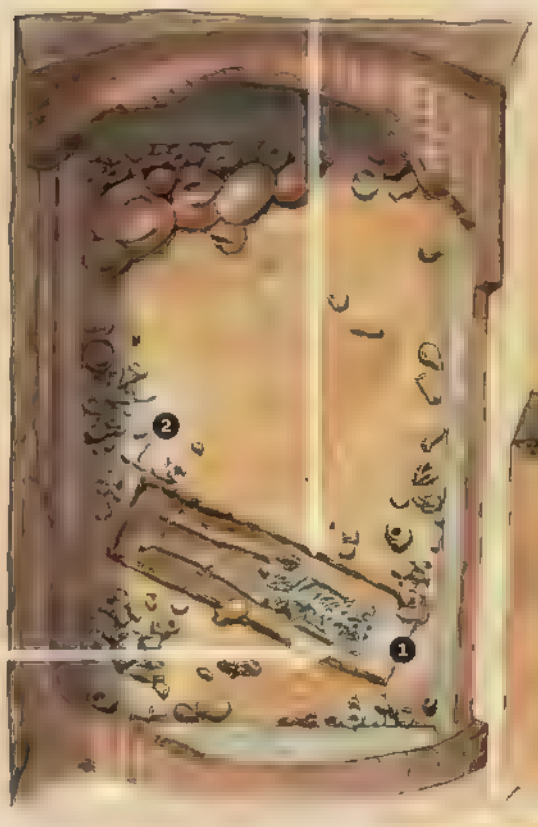
▲ **TWO RAMS** CARVED ON A SHELL PLAQUE FROM QUEEN PUABI'S TOMB

The queen's tomb—a rectangular chamber measuring 38 feet by 13 feet—was buried 26 feet down. A diagram of it, drawn by Woolley, shows a central shaft and the funeral chamber with the body still inside. Woolley interprets the presence of human and animal remains as evidence of collective sacrifice made at the moment of burial. With the tomb crammed with objects of enormous value and exquisite craftsmanship, Woolley and his team could count themselves extremely lucky. Unlike the others at Ur, Puabi's tomb had lain for well over 4,000 years unmolested by grave robbers.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

▲ **PRINT TAKEN FROM** A CYLINDER SEAL FOUND ALONGSIDE THE BODY OF PUABI SHOWING A BANQUET SCENE

NEAR THE BODY of the queen were found a number of amulets and three cylinder seals bearing inscriptions. One of these, made of lapis lazuli, carried the name Puabi and her title, *nin* (queen), thereby allowing archaeologists to identify the body.

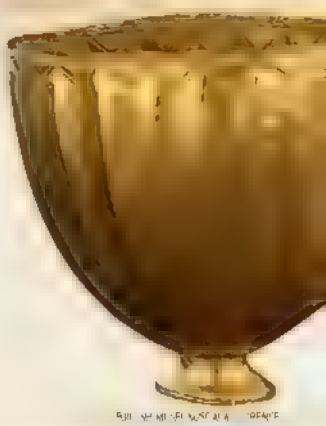


BRIDGEMAN/AE

◄ **HEADDRESS** OF QUEEN PUABI

THE BODY OF PUABI was covered with a cape fastened over her right shoulder and lavishly adorned with jewelry made of gold, carnelian, and lapis lazuli. On her head was a spectacular headdress decorated with golden flowers, leaves, and rings.

GOLDEN GOBLETS were found in the antechamber near a wooden chest that may have contained the queen's garments. Many other precious objects were discovered here too: amulets shaped like lions' heads, and goblets made of silver, soapstone, and electrum.



BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

GOLD GOBLET FOUND BESIDE ► THE SACRIFICED BODIES

THE CARRIAGE in Puabi's tomb was decorated with precious mosaic inlays and adorned with the golden heads of lions and bulls. It was found along with the remains of two oxen and their attendants.

◀ **SILVER RINGS** FROM THE REINS OF THE OXEN FOUND WITH THE CARRIAGE OF PUABI
BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA FLORENCE

TWO LYRES DECORATED with elaborate bulls' heads were discovered in the tomb of Queen Puabi. One of the young servants sacrificed beside the queen still had two fingers in place on one of the instruments.

▼ **GOLD LYRE** FROM THE TOMB OF QUEEN PUABI IN UR

SOLSO IMAGES

THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

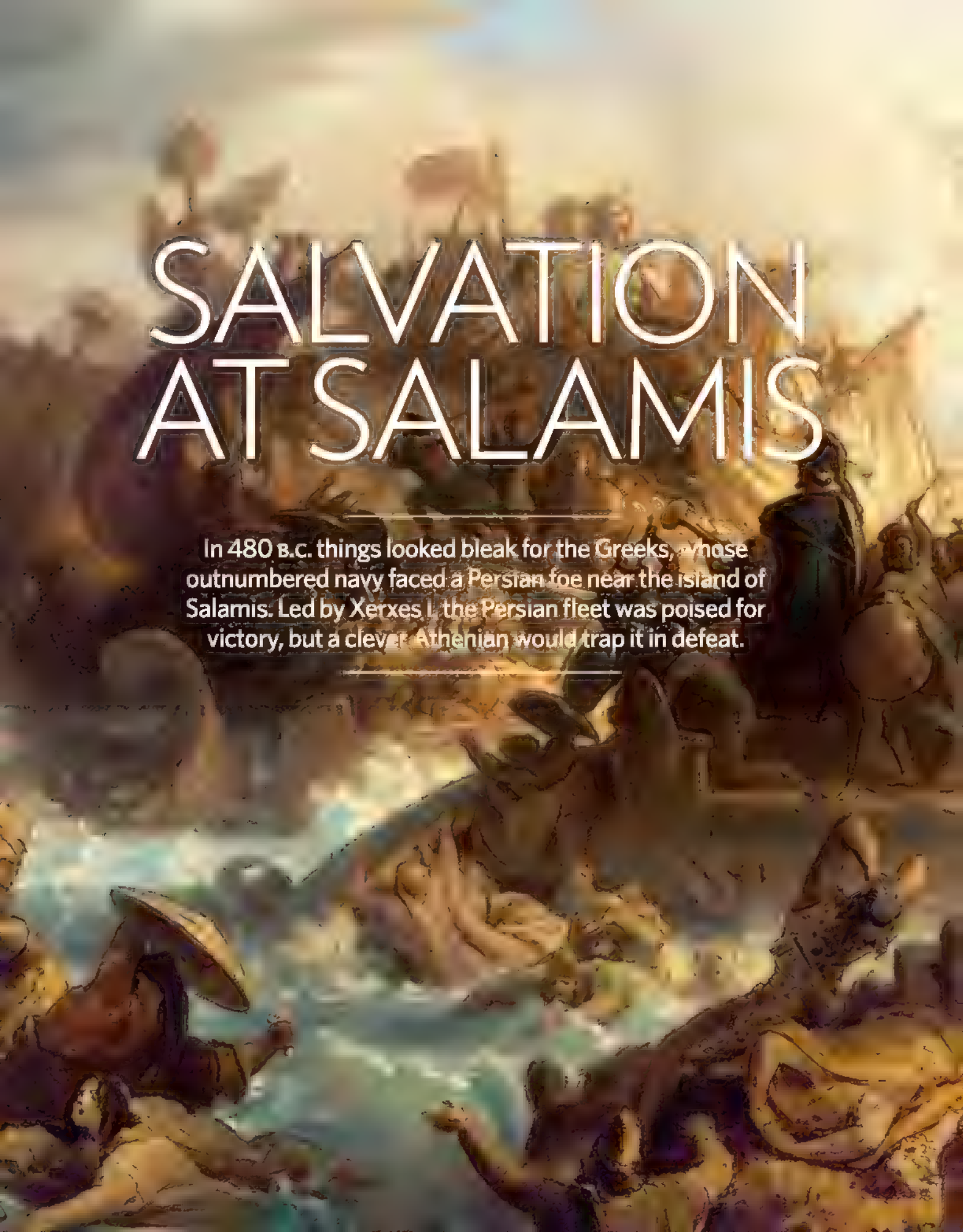
❶ Puabi's body rested on a bier inside the burial chamber alongside ❷ the bodies of servants and an array of grave goods. ❸ The exterior chamber contained a massive entourage of servants and soldiers who, Woolley theorized, had willingly poisoned themselves. ❹ A team of oxen and remains of a carriage sat on the floor, while ❺ their grooms rest nearby. ❻ A group of soldiers armed with daggers guard the tomb, and ❼ ten female attendants with elaborate headdresses lay here. ❽ Dominating the center of the room was a chest that may have contained textiles and clothing.

▲ **GOLD CHALICE** BELONGING TO QUEEN PUABI

GREECE VICTORIOUS

Wilhelm von Kaulbach's 1858 painting depicts the devastation of the mighty Persian fleet as King Xerxes (upper left) helplessly watches from the Attica coast.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM



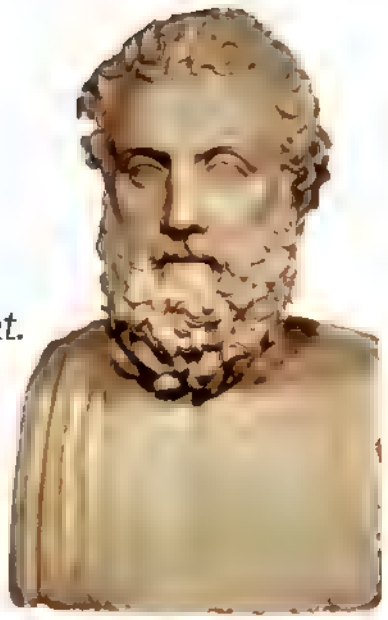
SALVATION AT SALAMIS

In 480 B.C. things looked bleak for the Greeks, whose outnumbered navy faced a Persian foe near the island of Salamis. Led by Xerxes I, the Persian fleet was poised for victory, but a clever Athenian would trap it in defeat.

IN MEMORIAM
It turns today, the Temple of Aphaea on the island of Aegina was built to commemorate the participation of soldiers from the island in the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.

PHOTOSTOCKAGE FOTOSTOCK

What shall withstand the torrent of his sway
When dreadful o'er the yielding shores,
The impetuous tide of battle roars,
And sweeps the weak opposing mounds away?
So Persia, with resistless might,
Rolls her unnumber'd hosts of heroes to the fight.



THE DRAMATIST OF SALAMIS

Athenian playwright Aeschylus (above) fought at Salamis, and later drew on his own firsthand experiences to write his play *The Persians* in 472 B.C.

IRONIC/ALBUM

Aeschylus' poetic words describe a massive force of Persian soldiers who threaten to overrun the city-states of Ancient Greece. The verse comes from his play *The Persians*, written in 472 B.C., which describes the outcome of a crucial battle in the conflict between Persia and Greek city-states. One of the earliest documented naval battles, the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. marked a crucial turning point in the Greco-Persian Wars, where the tide literally turned in favor of the Greeks.

In 480 B.C. the Persian king Xerxes I embarked on a mission to conquer Greek lands and reverse the humiliating defeat at the Battle of Marathon suffered ten years earlier by his father, Darius I. Since the first decade of the fifth century B.C., the mighty Persian Empire looked to expand into the Hellenic world, which had been able to rebuff the expansionist efforts.

In the latest Persian campaign, Xerxes amassed a tremendous military force and marched it into Europe in mid-480. Aeschylus' description, "unnumber'd hosts of heroes," was not an exaggeration: According to the Greek historian Herodotus, some 300,000 Persian soldiers crossed the Hellespont, a narrow strait in modern-day Turkey now called the Dardanelles. After using an ingenious system of pontoons to cross the strait, the vast armies of the Persian Empire then marched on into northern Greece where they set up camp.

The Persian monarch's early efforts met with huge success. Many parts of Greece had already surrendered or chosen to collaborate with the invaders. A few areas—Athens, Sparta and Corinth, among others—were still determined, however, to halt the invasion. Under the leadership of the Athenian general Themistocles, they concentrated their forces at two key points, the Thermopylae pass and the cape of Artemisium.

The relentless Persian advance broke through both of these points. At the Battle of Thermopylae, the Greek army, made up of mostly Spartan soldiers, was killed down to the last man. After news of the crushing defeat reached Artemisium, the Greeks abandoned that position and retreated to Salamis, an island off the Greek mainland near Athens, to regroup. The Persians had scored two important victories and were confident that they could secure another.

Attack on Athens

The way into central Greece now lay wide open to Xerxes, who immediately set his sights on Athens. Faced with imminent attack, the city was evacuated, leaving only a small contingent to defend Athens and its temple complex on

480 B.C. A VERY BIG YEAR

June
Persia's King Xerxes I crosses the Dardanelles, leading his army in a rapid advance west into the lands of the Greek city-states.

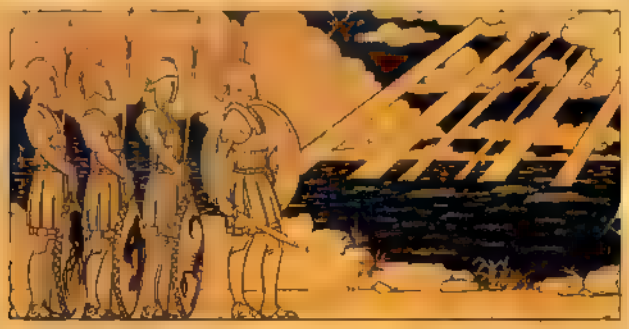
August
At the end of the month the Persian forces score two major victories: one at the Thermopylae pass and the other at Artemisium.

September
Athens is evacuated as the Persians advance. At the end of the month Xerxes is lured into the Salamis Strait, where he suffers a crushing defeat.

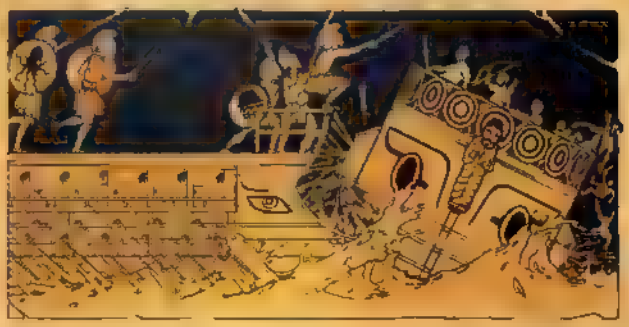
October
The Persians withdraw to Asia. The Greek general Themistocles is unable to convince the Spartans to fight on and attempt to block Xerxes' retreat.

THE TIDE TURNS AT SALAMIS

The overconfident Persians believed their superior numbers would easily destroy the smaller Greek fleet. Never suspecting a trap, the Persian navy was devastated by the smaller, faster Greek ships, which struck without mercy. By battle's end, the shores were strewn with the bodies of Xerxes' men.



1 A GREAT SHAFT OF LIGHT over Eleusis as day breaks is interpreted by the Greek camp as a divine sign to go into battle. They chant a hymn of thanksgiving, board their boats, and prepare to repel the attacking Persian fleet.



3 PHOENICIAN SHIPS, the vanguard of the Persian navy, lack the space to maneuver and are affected by the heavy swell caused by the winds through the strait. The Greek triremes force them to retreat, which panics the rest of the Persian fleet.

2 XERXES LOOKS ON from the foot of Mount Aegaleo as the battle rages. Some Phoenician captains who fled the scene blame the Ionian ships within the Persian fleet. But Xerxes accuses them of cowardice and orders their decapitation.

4 FOLLOWING THE ROUT, a final humiliation is dealt by the Greeks and their allies, who, after destroying Xerxes' fleet, surround the tiny island of Psyttaleia to finish off the Persian soldiers encamped there.

ILLUSTRATIONS SAM PEREZ

the Acropolis. When the Persian forces arrived, however, the garrison was powerless to stop them. Xerxes quickly took control of the city, sacking it completely. Those who had stayed behind were massacred, and the temples of the Acropolis were burned to the ground.

It was a desperate moment. Athens and the surrounding area of Attica were occupied by the invaders. Many Greek cities were already cooperating with the Persians in order to save themselves. The Greek alliance had just one last hope of salvation: its naval fleet at Salamis.

Decisions, Decisions

Salamis is an island to the southwest of Athens. On its eastern side, the island forms a narrow strait with the Attica shoreline, providing a natural haven for the Greek vessels. After evacuation from Athens, most Athenians had decamped to this island too. It was a perfect spot for the Greeks to plan their next move.

Representatives of the 20 or so city-states committed to resist the Persians, however, did not agree on which strategy to follow. The Spartans argued for retreating immediately, in order to focus on defending the Corinth isthmus. This was the thin bridge of land linking mainland Greece with the Peloponnesus peninsula to the south, the only part of Greek territory which had not yet succumbed to the relentless Persian advance. Anticipating this threat, the Spartans had already begun to construct a five-mile-long defensive wall there.

The delegates from Athens, Aegina, and Megarus, however, argued for staying to face the Persians at Salamis. Familiar with its waters, they considered the strait would be the ideal site for a naval battle. Their strategy was based partly on subterfuge. In the narrow waters of the strait, and unlike on the open sea, the Greeks could disguise the fact that they were vastly outnumbered. According to Aeschylus, the Greeks had only 310 vessels while the Persians had 1,207 ships, which included Ionian, Phoenician, and Cypriot vessels, as well as some originating from the coasts of Asia Minor.

The Athenian leader Themistocles was clear in his support for the plan to stay and fight. Faced with opposition from the Spartan commander Eurybiades, he laid down an ultimatum: If their allies would not commit to fighting at Salamis, Themistocles would convince his fellow Athenians to abandon Greece and settle in southern Italy instead, leaving the remaining Greeks to face the Persian invaders alone. Eurybiades finally agreed to stay and fight.

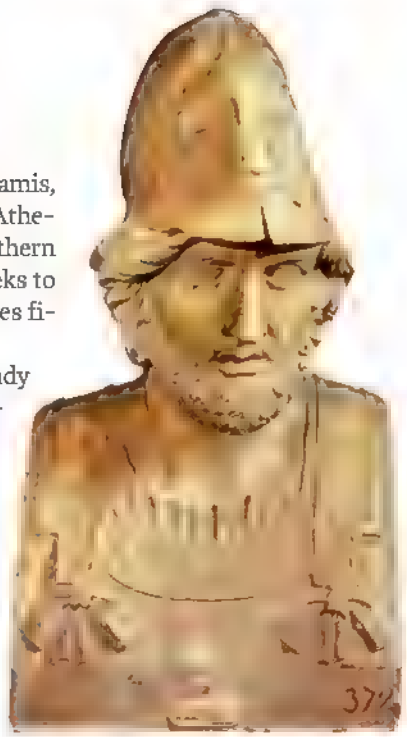
Meanwhile, the Persian fleet had already taken the coast of Attica and was now preparing to bring its campaign to a victorious conclusion. Xerxes' admirals had every cause to feel huge optimism: They knew that their own fleet was vastly bigger than that of the Greeks, and that their enemy was demoralized and weakened by internal disputes.

Setting the Trap

On the Persian side, however, there were also arguments over strategy. Herodotus reports that Queen Artemisia I of Caria (in modern-day western Turkey) commanded ships in the Persian fleet and proposed blockading the Greeks at Salamis. She suggested occupying the narrow exits into the open sea to the east and west of the strait. The Persians would lie in wait while the Greeks' desperation and lack of provisions drove them to surrender.

It was a sound idea, but Xerxes was eager to wage battle immediately. Herodotus relates that Xerxes' impatience was the result of a clever trap laid for him by Themistocles. The astute Athenian general allegedly sent a false traitor to Xerxes with a message that the Greeks were getting ready to flee at first light the next day.

It is uncertain if Herodotus's story of the false messenger is true or invented, but Xerxes did order a contingent of ground troops, some 400 men, to disembark for the deserted, tiny island of Psyttaleia at the entrance to the Salamis Strait. They were to finish off any Greek survivors of the impending battle who might try to seek refuge there. Xerxes also commanded part of his fleet to maneuver into position at the mouth of the narrow western strait to block passage to open waters. The bulk of the fleet was stationed opposite on the wider eastern side. The Greeks found themselves surrounded by Persian vessels and with their only escape route barred. When Themistocles was informed of these movements, he couldn't contain his delight.



A CUNNING WARRIOR

The strategic planning and astute decision-making of the Athenian general Themistocles (above) were key factors in the Greeks' unexpected naval victory.

ORONOZ/ALBUM

DIRE STRAIT

In 480 B.C. the Greeks trapped Persia's navy in the narrow waterway between Salamis and the mainland. Streaming to and from the port of Piraeus (bottom), container ships still navigate a part of the Aegean that has bustled with trade since antiquity.

MICHAL KRAKOWIAK/GETTY IMAGES

A NEW HIGH

The Persians destroyed [illegible] temples when they sacked Athens. Forty years later, an enduring symbol of Athenian greatness, the Parthenon would rise to crown the Acropolis.

Themistocles' tactics were astute. He wanted to make the Persians believe that their imposing armada had thrown the Greeks into a panic. This misperception would lure Xerxes' fleet into the narrow strait. And this plan worked. As the Persians sailed forward, the Greeks rowed back deeper into the strait, creating an illusion of retreat. The heavy Persian vessels followed until they found themselves well within the narrow confines of the strait. Then the trap was sprung.

A Dramatic Battle

No known Persian accounts of the battle have survived, so reports all come from the Greek side. When the Persian ships were in place, the Greeks gave a great battle cry. Aeschylus, who himself had fought at Salamis, re-creates this first moment of the battle in *The Persians:*

> At once from ev'ry Greek with glad acclaim
> Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes
> The echo of the island rocks return'd,
> Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts

Aeschylus continues his description of the battle as it descended into chaos:

> But their throng'd numbers, in the narrow seas
> Confined, want room for action; and, deprived
> Of mutual aid, beaks clash with beaks, and each
> Breaks all the other's oars

The Persians had committed a fatal error by fighting in a space chosen by the enemy. The strait was much too narrow for them to deploy their vessels properly. The wind, blowing from the south, created a swell that surged into the strait and further complicated their attempts to maneuver. The Greeks, familiar with the conditions and with the waters, took advantage of the Persians' disorientation, and went for the kill:

> The Grecian navy circled them around
> With fierce assault; and rushing from its
> height
> The inverted vessel sinks: the sea no more
> Wears its accustomed aspect, with foul
> wrecks
> And blood disfigured; floating carcasses
> Roll on the rocky shores

Sources say that the Greeks sank about 300 Persian vessels while losing only about 40 of their own.

King Xerxes, meanwhile, looked on from a promontory at the foot of Mount Aegaleo near the Attica coast as the battle raged. From there he had a panoramic view of the disaster unfolding in the strait. Aeschylus described Xerxes' reaction to the devastation of his fleet:

> Deep were the groans of Xerxes when he saw
> This havoc; for his seat, a lofty mound
> Commanding the wide sea, o'erlook'd his hosts.
> With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,
> And through his troops embattled on the shore
> Gave signal of retreat

The outcome of this brief, confused naval battle would have a massive impact on both the winners and losers. Greece would begin to rebuild and soon would enter a golden age after the Hellenic lands had been protected. In just 40 years, the Parthenon would be built atop the Acropolis, becoming a marvel for the ages. Although the Greco-Persian Wars rumbled on for many years afterward, the Persians never again presented a serious threat to Athens.

Xerxes' future would not be as bright. With no navy to support them, his forces retreated back into Asia. Aeschylus' dramatization of the impact is bleak, at best:

> Woe to the towns through Asia's peopled realms!
> Woe to the land of Persia, once the port
> Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state
> Vanish'd at once, and all thy spreading honors
> Fall'n, lost!

After the defeat at Salamis, Xerxes's empire began to decline. The demands of war as well as massive building projects at home caused too much financial strain for the Persians to endure. The army and navy could not be rebuilt. Xerxes withdrew to Persia, ruling for 15 more years until his assassination in 465 B.C.

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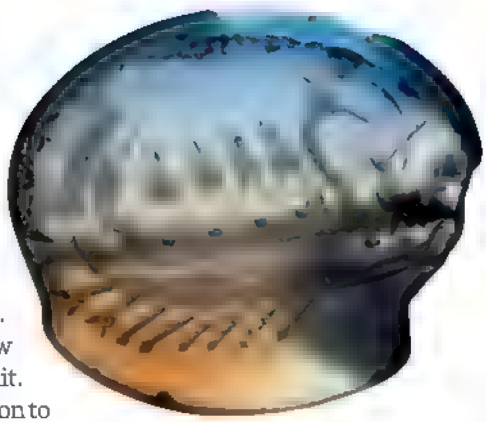
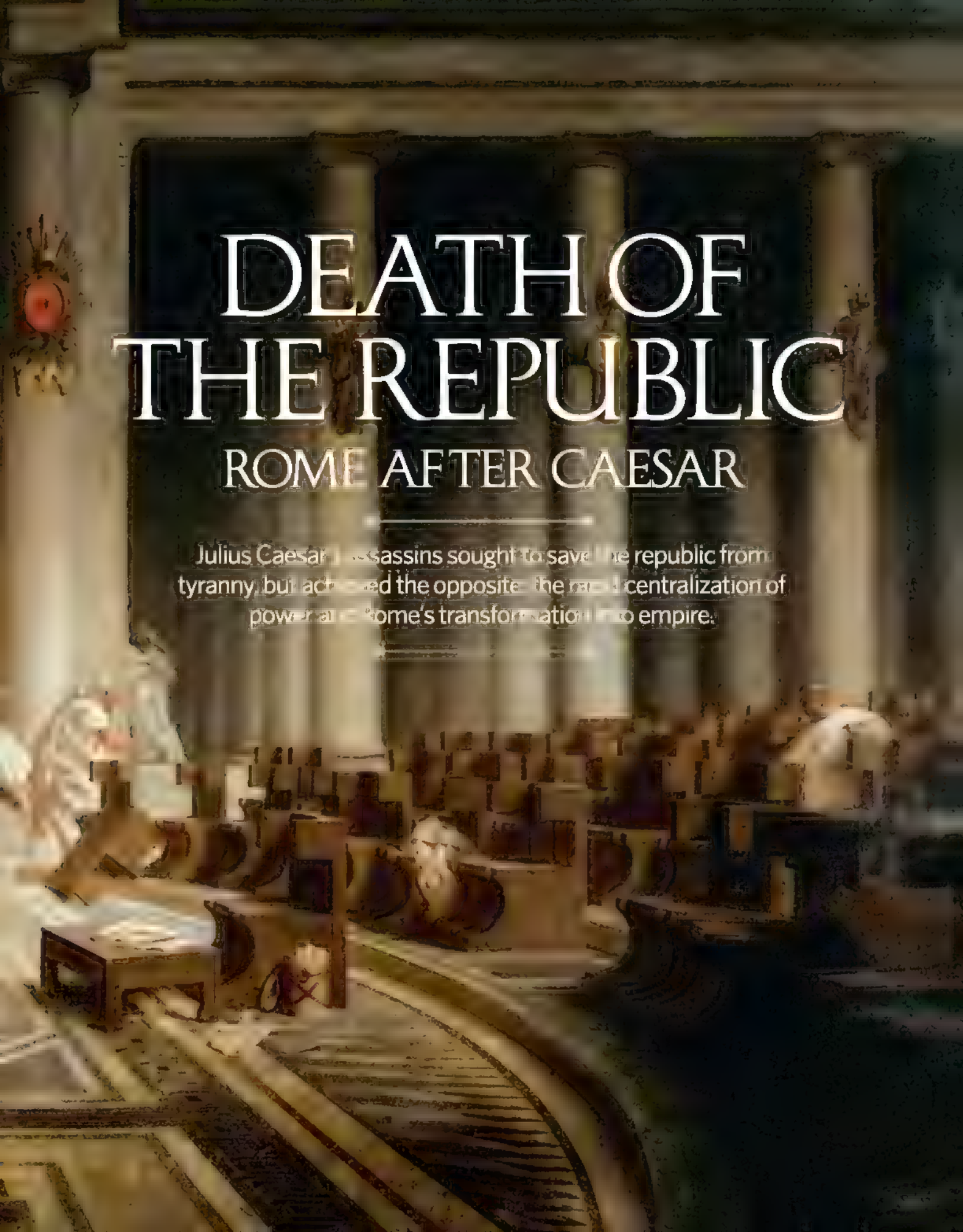


LIVELY AND QUICK

This fifth-century B.C. brooch depicts a trireme, a light, nimble ship used by the Greeks. Its maneuverability gave Athens a huge advantage over the heavier, slower Persian ships

AKG/ALBUM

THEN FALL, CAESAR!
Daggers aloft, the conspirators proclaim their bloody deed, leaving Caesar's dead body sprawled in the foreground. Oil painting by Jean-Léon Gerôme, 1867



DEATH OF THE REPUBLIC

ROME AFTER CAESAR

Julius Caesar's assassins sought to save the republic from tyranny, but achieved the opposite: the rapid centralization of power and Rome's transformation into empire.

Romans Play for Power

January 14, 44 B.C.
Emerging as the victor in the civil war against Pompey and his sons, Julius Caesar is appointed consul and dictator for the fifth time

February 14, 44 B.C.
Caesar is appointed perpetual dictator by the Senate, a decision that confirms fears among his enemies that Caesar has tyrannical aspirations.

March 15, 44 B.C.
Caesar attends a meeting in the Theater of Pompey where he is stabbed to death by a group of senators led by Cassius and Brutus

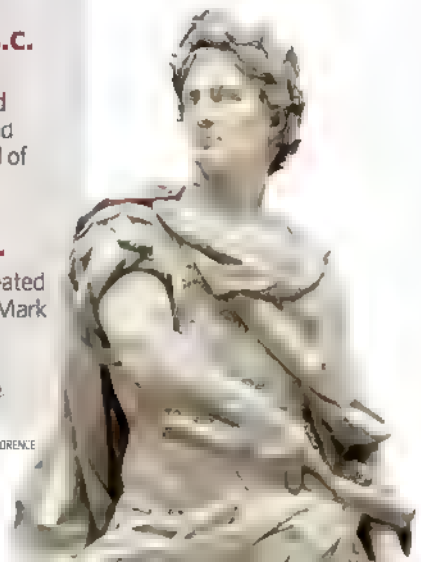
March 17, 44 B.C.
All of Caesar's actions while in government are approved by the Senate, and Mark Antony persuades Brutus to give Caesar a state funeral.

March 20, 44 B.C.
Julius Caesar's body is carried to the Forum, where Mark Antony gives a speech that inflames the passions of the people against the assassins.

November 27, 43 B.C.
Caesar's great-nephew Octavian, Mark Antony, and Lepidus establish the Second Triumvirate, dividing control of Rome between them.

October 23, 42 B.C.
Cassius and Brutus are defeated and killed by Octavian and Mark Antony's army at the Battle of Philippi Octavian carries Brutus's head back to Rome

JULIUS REX?
A 17th-century statue of Julius Caesar appears regal (below), but in life he did not want to be called a monarch: "My name is Caesar, not King." Nonetheless, his thirst for power alarmed senators.



WHITE IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE

The Ides of March, March 15, is perhaps the most infamous date on the Roman calendar. On that day, in 44 B.C., the Roman Senate was set to meet at the curia in the Theater of Pompey in the presence of Julius Caesar, the recently appointed perpetual dictator of Rome. It was the moment Marcus Brutus, Gaius Cassius, and a large group of other senators and patricians were waiting for. The great general, who had expanded Roman rule and crushed his enemies at home, had become, in their view, a tyrant. That morning, on the pretense of greeting him, the conspirators surrounded the seated figure of their leader, and when the signal was given, started to stab him. Caesar, realizing it was futile to resist, covered his head with his toga. According to his later biographer, Suetonius, he died without uttering a single cry.

Rarely, if ever, has the death of one man affected the course of history as much as the violent end of Gaius Julius Caesar. The power struggle that followed would, over time, lead to the very outcome that the conspirators had sought to

THE POWER OF SPEECH
Staging Caesar's funeral in the Forum, Mark Antony channeled the mourning ritual into a political event. The ceremony was held near the Arch of Septimius Severus (left). In the foreground are the ruins of the Temple of Caesar, later built by Emperor Augustus.

avoid: a concentration of power in the hands of Caesar's descendants, and the transition of Rome from a republic to an empire, whose administration, culture, and language left a lasting impact on the modern world.

Strongman or Savior

Long before that fateful March day, the old Roman system of government had been under mounting strain. Rejecting monarchy, and governed by its aristocracy since the sixth century B.C., the Roman Republic was already dominating the Mediterranean world 200 years before Caesar's birth. Ever more powerful, its generals began to fight one another for political supremacy, culminating in the destructive civil wars between Caesar himself and Pompey the Great. Riven by military and aristocratic infighting, slave revolts and piracy, the republic, in Caesar's lifetime, had become increasingly unstable.

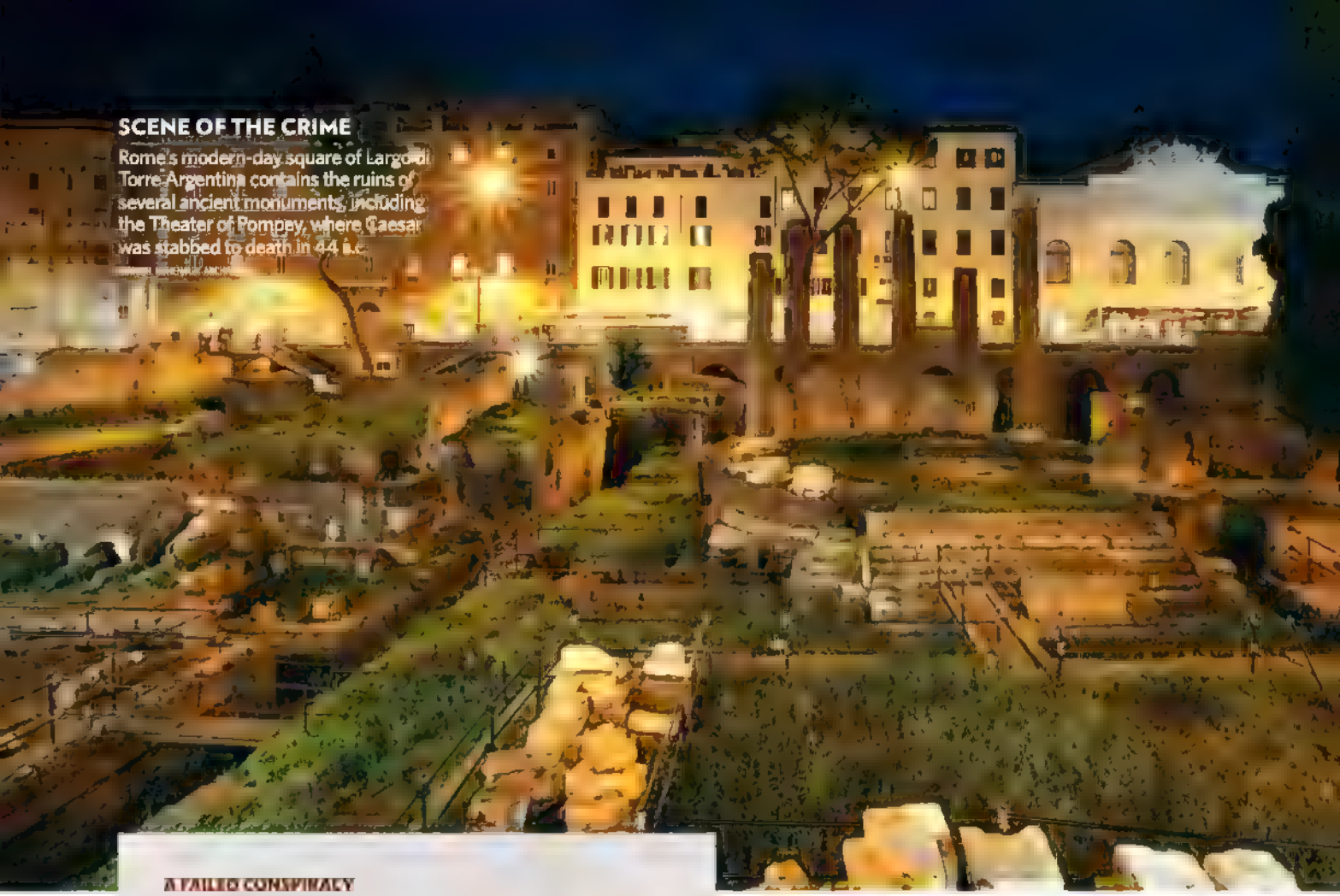
Having emerged as Rome's strongman in 45 B.C., Caesar was determined to use his power to impose order. To some, this decisiveness would return Rome to greatness. But to avowed republicans, such as Brutus and the other conspirators, this goal smacked of tyranny and dangerous ambition.

CONSPIRATOR COIN
Brutus had coins minted in 42 B.C. to commemorate the assassination of Caesar. One side shows a freedman's cap flanked by two daggers. The words below, EID MAR, are Latin for "Ides of March," the date of Caesar's death.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

Historians rely on several sources for the assassination and its aftermath. These include the Roman historian Plutarch, whose account inspired William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*. Plutarch reports that, following the stabbing, Brutus went through the curia trying to whip up support from among the other senators there. But they had all fled in terror, fearing—understandably—they were also about to be killed.

The "liberators," as they called themselves, then went to the Capitol, shaking their fists as they walked, urging the citizens of Rome "to embrace their freedom." The populace, however, gripped by fear, had deserted the streets. Some senators joined the conspirators at the Capitol and urged them to go to the Forum to try and impose some control over the city. Brutus did just that. Speaking from the Rostra, he tried to convince the people that his actions had been



SCENE OF THE CRIME
Rome's modern-day square of Largo di Torre Argentina contains the ruins of several ancient monuments, including the Theater of Pompey, where Caesar was stabbed to death in 44 B.C.

A FAILED CONSPIRACY

CICERO REFLECTS

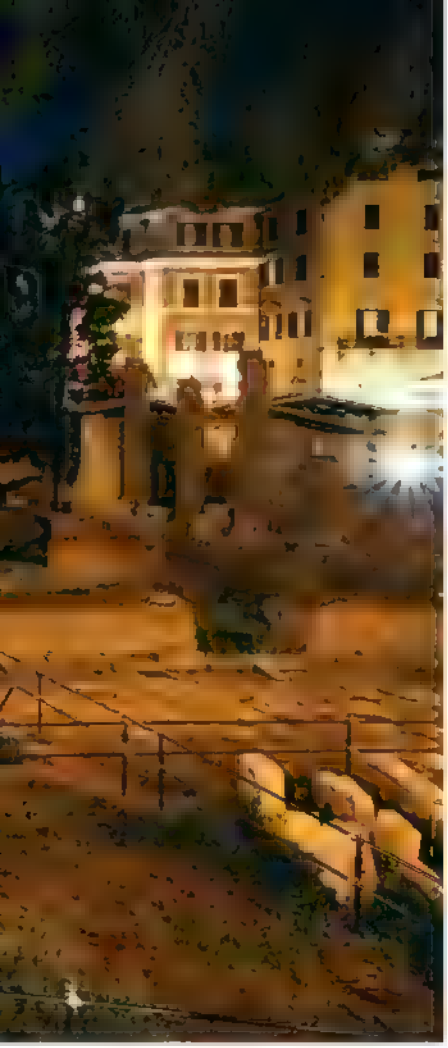
In a letter he wrote to his friend Atticus just two months after Caesar's death, the lawyer and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero condemned the disastrous Ides of March conspiracy. The "liberators," he wrote, acted "with the courage of true men but the brains of children." Not only was it poorly planned, but the assassination had probably been unnecessary: After all, it was unlikely Caesar would have returned from his next ambitious campaign in the eastern Mediterranean. All Brutus and his band had to do was let him die abroad. Cicero also took aim at the rebels' lack of political realism. It was only once they had killed the dictator that they discovered that Rome's people were not behind them. That lack of public enthusiasm was unsurprising. For all their talk of freedom and restoration of the republic, what Brutus and his friends were actually proposing was a political system that preserved the privileges of a few families of ancient lineage. In contrast, Caesar had used his personal power to bring about reforms that benefited the lower classes, believing that the advantages of his autocratic government would matter more than the nostalgic ideals of Rome's republican past.

justified. The crowd, subdued at first, listened calmly. But when another conspirator began leveling accusations against the dead Caesar, the massed crowd started to seethe with anger. Fearing a violent reaction by the people, the conspirators thought it more prudent to withdraw to Capitoline Hill, where they remained hidden throughout the night.

Meanwhile, Caesar's followers were taking up positions. As the supreme commander of the cavalry, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus imposed a military occupation of the Forum, at the foot of the hill where Caesar's killers had retreated. He was joined by a young soldier who would prove to be a key player in the political endgame that unfolded: Mark Antony, Caesar's faithful companion during the civil war against Pompey.

The Man of the Moment

On hearing of Caesar's death, Mark Antony had disguised himself as a slave and taken refuge in the home of friends. But when he saw the conspirators hesitate, he realized there was still a good deal at stake. He knew he lacked Caesar's



BLOODY SPECTACLE AT THE PUBLIC FUNERAL, MARK ANTONY DISPLAYS CAESAR'S TORN, BLOOD... THE MOURNER... BY JOSEPH...

WHITE IMAGES/SCALA, FLORENCE

prestige and commanded no personal military power. He could, however, set himself up as the guarantor of civil peace in a city that had been rocked by internal conflict for decades. He had youth on his side, too, and most important of all, a strong financial motive: His role as political leader could fund his extravagant lifestyle.

On March 17 Mark Antony called together the Senate to discuss what to do next. The senators were deeply divided. Many sympathized with Brutus's aversion to dictatorship and welcomed a return to constitutional government. At the same time, however, they realized that labeling Caesar a tyrant could result in the negation of everything positive he had done while in power, further destabilizing Rome's huge territorial possessions. Of more immediate, personal concern: Revoking all Caesar had done could undermine their own positions and incomes.

Mark Antony brokered a compromise. The conspirators would not be prosecuted. In fact, some of them would be appointed governors of eastern provinces, where their personal safety would be guaranteed.

On the surface, all was conciliatory. Mark Antony and Lepidus even sent their children to the Capitol as hostages, and invited Cassius and Brutus to dinner. All this was, however, a cunning diversionary tactic, as Mark Antony was determined to eliminate the conspirators. He had an ace up his sleeve, a way of winning the people over to his side that would prove decisive. And he played it at Caesar's funeral.

"A SHREWD CONTRIVER"

Shakespeare's description of Mark Antony, depicted on this coin from the British Museum, reflects his mastery of duplicity. Having won the assassins' trust, he turned the populace against them, and seized power for himself.

BRITISH MUSEUM/SCALA, FLORENCE

The Body and the Speech

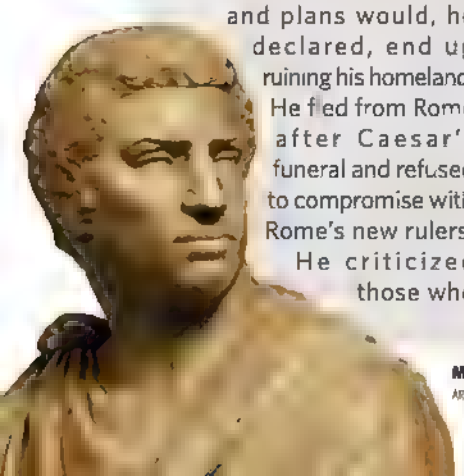
During the edgy, confused days following the assassination, Caesar's remains took on unanticipated political significance. Had the conspirators thrown the dictator's body into the Tiber River after they murdered him—as they had planned—events might have ended differently. They had left it, however, in the atrium of the curia, at the foot of Pompey's statue. Once three of the dead man's slaves had come to retrieve it, the prospect of a funeral became inevitable. Caesar's father-in-law, Lucius

ENDGAME AT PHILIPPI
This 16th-century tapestry depicts two battles, fought one after the other, near the Thracian city of Philippi in October 42 B.C., when Cassius and Brutus were defeated by Mark Antony and Octavian.

THE END OF BRUTUS

A FATAL FALL

Three years after the plot, nearly all of Caesar's assassins were dead. Accused of treason, all died in exile, some in battle and others as victims of the proscriptions ordered by the second triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus. The most famous member of the conspiracy, Marcus Brutus, had been educated according to the most demanding of republican virtues, and claimed he had risen up against Caesar because he loved Rome more than the dictator, whose enterprises and plans would, he declared, end up ruining his homeland. He fled from Rome after Caesar's funeral and refused to compromise with Rome's new rulers. He criticized those who did, such as the Roman statesman and scholar Cicero. "Our ancestors did not accept even their own fathers as their masters," he wrote. He set sail for Greece, continuing to resist until the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. When he saw he had been defeated by the forces of Mark Antony and Octavian, he fell on his sword, committing suicide in a way he deemed worthy of his ideals of Roman valor.



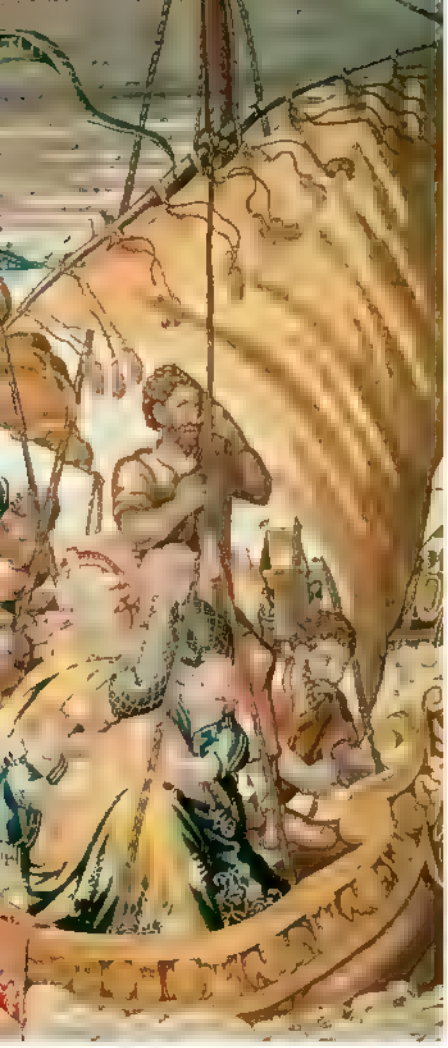
MARCUS BRUTUS BUST BY MICHELANGELO
ART ARCHIVE

Calpurnius Piso, demanded that full honors should be afforded the dead ruler, in keeping with his position as Pontifex Maximus. The conspirators, however, wanted him buried in secret without honors, as befitted a tyrant.

It was at this critical moment that Mark Antony's persuasive gifts came into play. Arguing that a low-key ceremony could provoke the people to anger, the ambitious soldier managed to persuade Brutus to hold a public funeral. It was a mistake for which the chief of the conspirators would pay dearly.

The funeral Mark Antony set about arranging was spectacular. The dictator's body was placed in a marble casket covered in purple and gold, which was displayed for several days in the Campus Martius on a sumptuous marble and gold bier. Theatrical and music events were held around it to commemorate the deceased's epic achievements.

On March 20 Caesar's casket was carried to the Forum on the shoulders of a large group of magistrates. They placed it in front of the Rostra where Mark Antony gave the eulogy. Mark



LUIS PADILLA/VISUAL AB

Antony first ordered a herald to shout out the honors that the senators had granted Caesar, as well as the oath they had all made to protect his life. He then gave a speech designed as much to move his listeners to sympathy for Caesar and to stir up feelings against the murderers. Picking up the cloth covering the casket, he revealed it as the toga Caesar had been wearing when he was struck down. The garment was ripped where the killers' knives had pierced it and stained with blood. "Fellow citizens have brought death to a man no outside enemy could kill," he cried to the now restive crowd.

Inciting the Masses

Julius Caesar had written his will just six months earlier. In an act of shrewd demagoguery, Mark Antony revealed its contents as part of his oration: The dictator had left the city his splendid gardens on the banks of the Tiber and gave every citizen a gift of 300 sesterces. Sorrow swept the crowd, followed by indignation when they heard that the heirs named in Caesar's will included one of the conspirators.

Later, on the lighting of the pyre, the people tore down the magistrates' benches and used them as firewood. The collective sorrow soon turned to blind anger. The mob marched on the conspirators' homes, crying "Kill the murderers," bearing brands taken from the funeral pyre itself, and forcing the killers to flee Rome.

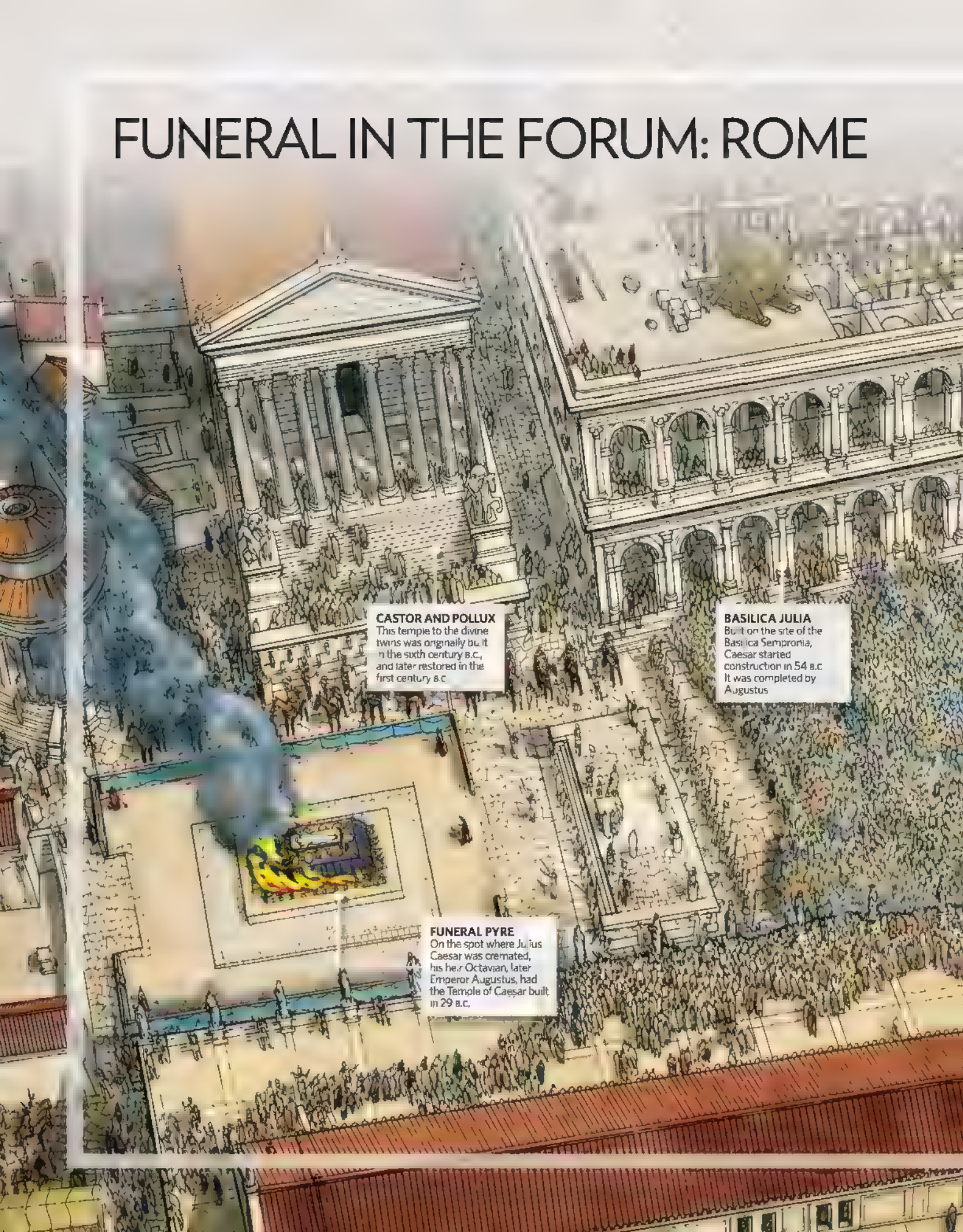
The conspiracy against Caesar had not only failed but spectacularly backfired. Mark Antony's ambitions would ultimately compel him toward a devastating conflict with Octavian, Caesar's heir and great-nephew who would defeat Antony and go on to establish the Roman Empire. Caesar's power and system of government lived on in Octavian, known after 27 B.C. as the emperor Augustus. Through a mixture of statesmanship, ruthlessness, and political genius, Augustus would build an empire stretching from Portugal to Babylon and usher in the Pax Romana, an era of peace and prosperity lasting for almost two centuries.

JUAN PABLO SÁNCHEZ
AN EXPERT ON GREECE IN THE ROMAN PERIOD, SÁNCHEZ IS VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE NORTHEAST NORMAL UNIVERSITY CHANGCHUN, CHINA

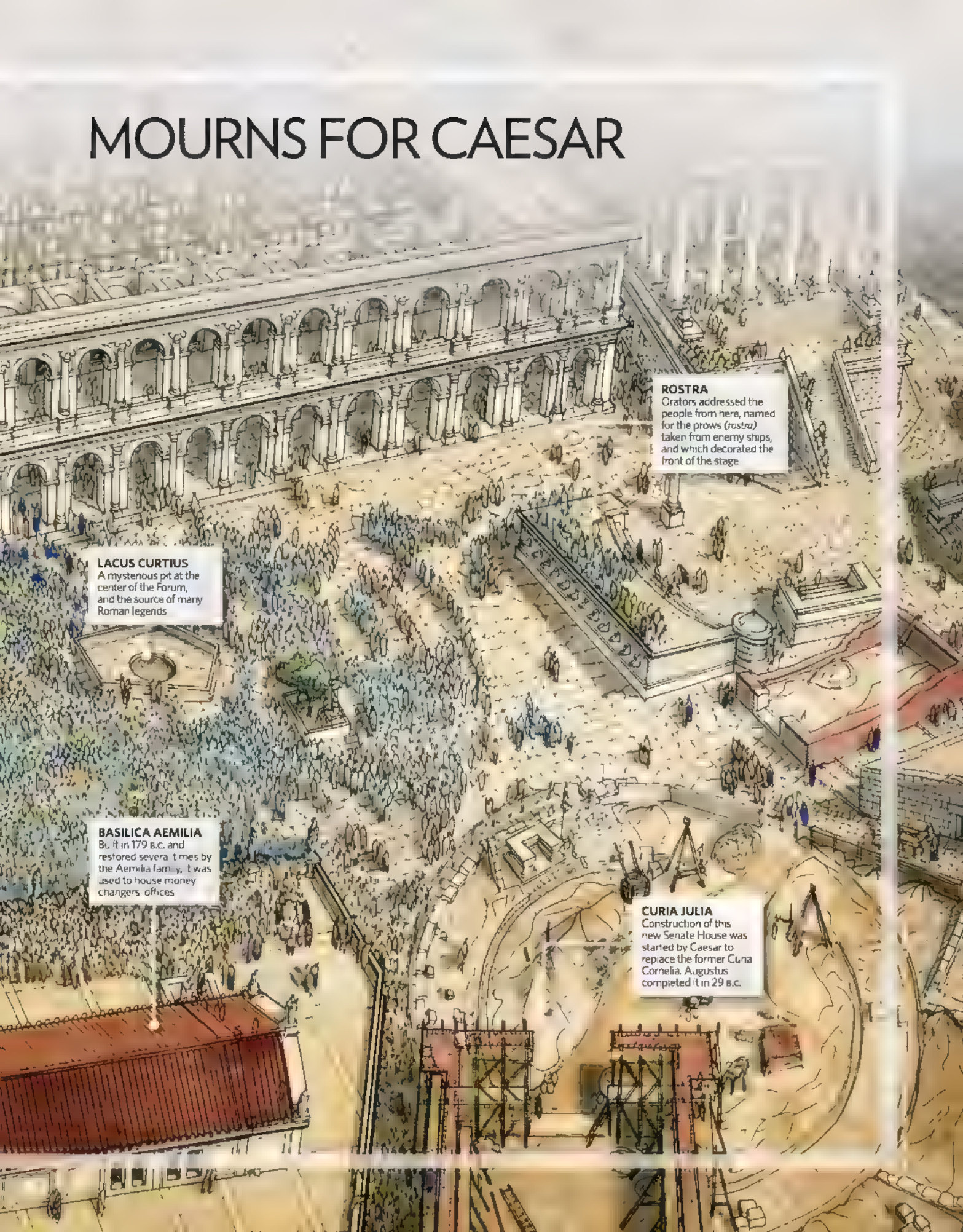
FROM GENERAL TO A GOD

Dedicated by Octavian in 29 B.C. on the site of Caesar's cremation in the Forum, the Temple of Caesar further consolidated Octavian's image as a ruler from a powerful, now divine, dynasty

FUNERAL IN THE FORUM: ROME

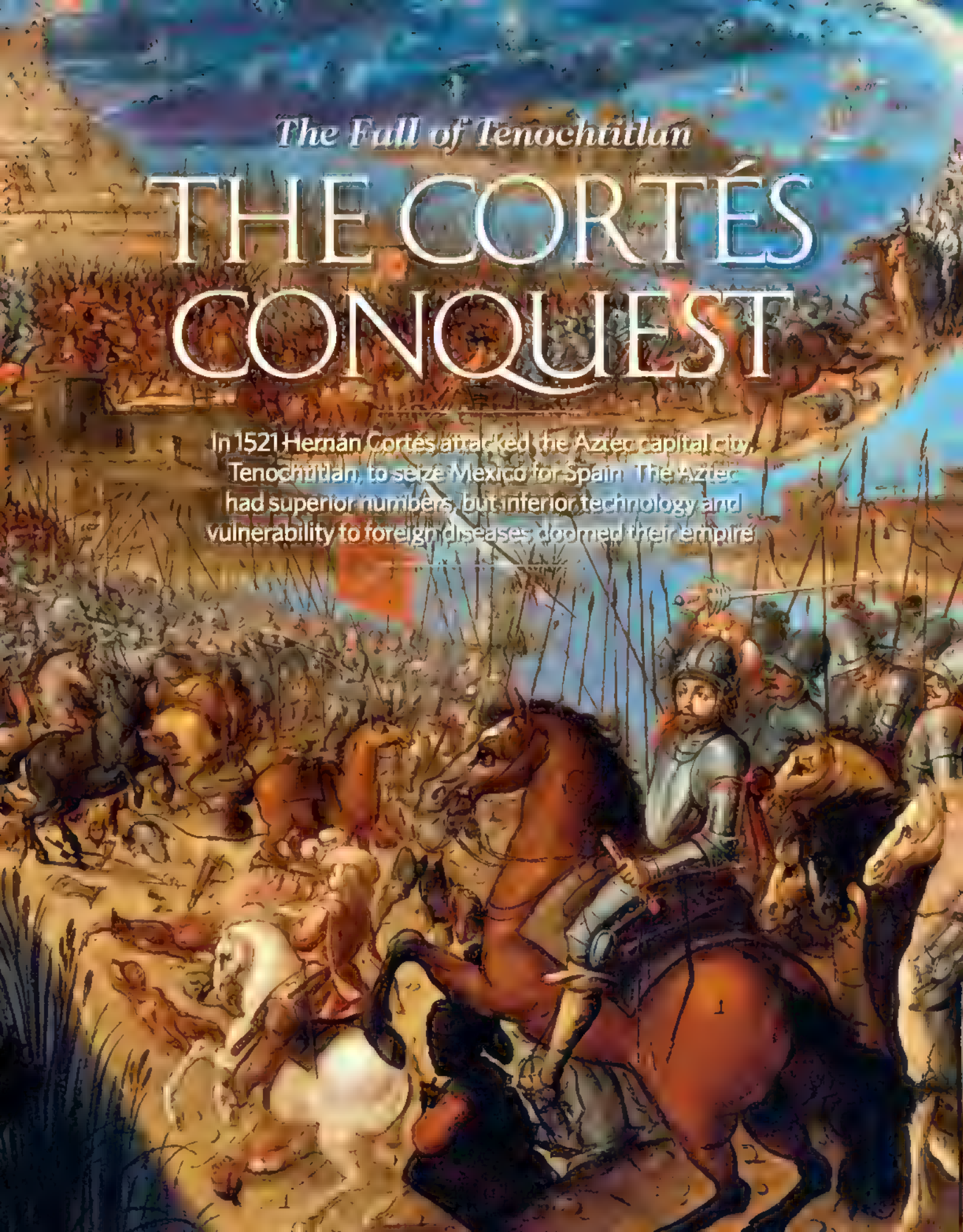

CASTOR AND POLLUX
This temple to the divine twins was originally built in the sixth century B.C., and later restored in the first century B.C.
BASILICA JULIA
Built on the site of the Basilica Sempronia, Caesar started construction in 54 B.C. It was completed by Augustus
FUNERAL PYRE
On the spot where Julius Caesar was cremated, his heir Octavian, later Emperor Augustus, had the Temple of Caesar built in 29 B.C.

MOURNS FOR CAESAR


ROSTRA
Orators addressed the people from here, named for the prows (*rostra*) taken from enemy ships, and which decorated the front of the stage
LACUS CURTIUS
A mysterious pit at the center of the Forum, and the source of many Roman legends
BASILICA AEMILIA
Built in 179 B.C. and restored several times by the Aemilia family, it was used to house money changers' offices
CURIA JULIA
Construction of this new Senate House was started by Caesar to replace the former Curia Cornelia. Augustus completed it in 29 B.C.

THE SPANISH SIEGE
This 18th-century oil painting, part of the Conquest of Mexico series at the Library of Congress, shows Hernán Cortés poised at the gates of the capital of the Aztec Empire.

BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY



The Fall of Tenochtitlan

THE CORTÉS CONQUEST

In 1521 Hernán Cortés attacked the Aztec capital city, Tenochtitlan, to seize Mexico for Spain. The Aztec had superior numbers, but inferior technology and vulnerability to foreign diseases doomed their empire.

The first reference to the New World was made in 1503 by the Italian explorer and financier Amerigo Vespucci—for whom the entire continent of America was later named. The sheer scale of the "new" landmass became further apparent to Europeans in the course of the expedition led by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who in 1513 crossed Central America to reach the Pacific.

At first, colonization by the burgeoning new world power, Spain, was centered on the islands of the Caribbean, with little contact with the complex, indigenous civilizations on the mainland. It was not long, however, before the lure of wealth spurred Spain's adventurers beyond exploration and into a phase of conquest that would lay the foundations of the modern world. Whole swaths of the Americas rapidly fell to the Spanish crown, a transformation begun by the ruthless conqueror of the Aztec Empire, Hernán Cortés.

Like other conquistadores of the early 16th century, Cortés had already gained considerable experience by living in the New World before embarking on his exploits. Born to modest lower nobility in the Spanish city of Medellín in 1485, Cortés stood out at an early age for his intelligence and his restless spirit of adventure inspired by the recent voyages of Christopher Columbus.

In 1504—as Vespucci's New World pamphlet was circulating through Europe—Cortés left Spain for the island of Hispaniola (today, home to the Dominican Republic and Haiti), where he rose through the ranks of the fledgling colonial administration. In 1511 he joined an expedition to conquer Cuba, where he was appointed secretary to the island's first colonial governor, Diego Velázquez.

During these years, Cortés developed the skills that would stand him in good stead in his short, turbulent career as a conquistador. He gained valuable insights into the organization of the islands' indigenous peoples and proved an adept arbiter in the continual squabbles that broke out among the Spaniards, forever vying to enlarge their estates or snag lucrative administrative positions.

In 1518 Velázquez appointed his secretary to lead an expedition to Mexico. Cortés—as Velázquez was to discover to his cost—was set on becoming a leader rather than a loyal follower. He set off for the coast of the Yucatán Peninsula in February 1519 with 11 ships, about 100 sailors, 500 soldiers, and 16 horses. Over the following months Cortés would take matters into his own hands, disobey the governor's orders, and turn what had been intended to be an exploratory mission into a historic military conquest.

A World Ends

To the Aztec, 1519 was a year that began with their empire as the uncontested power in the region. Its capital city, Tenochtitlan, ruled 400 to 500 small states with a total population of five to six million. The fortunes of the kingdom of Moctezuma, however, were doomed to a swift and spectacular decline once Cortés and his men disembarked on the Mexican coast.

Having rapidly imposed control over the indigenous population in the coastal region, Cortés was given 20 slaves by a local chieftain. One of them, a young woman, could speak several local languages and soon learned Spanish too. Her linguistic skills would prove crucial to Cortés's invasion plans, and she became his interpreter as well as his concubine. She soon came to be known as Malinche, or Doña Marina. The conquistador had a son with her, Martín, who is often regarded as the first ever mestizo—a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry.

The news of the foreigners' arrival soon reached the Aztec emperor, Moctezuma, in Tenochtitlan. To appease the Spaniards, he sent envoys and gifts to Cortés, but he only succeeded in inflaming Cortés's desires for more Aztec riches. Cortés once described the land near

1519 **HERNÁN CORTÉS** reaches Veracruz, where he scuttles his ships. He crosses Mexico and enters Tenochtitlan for the first time.

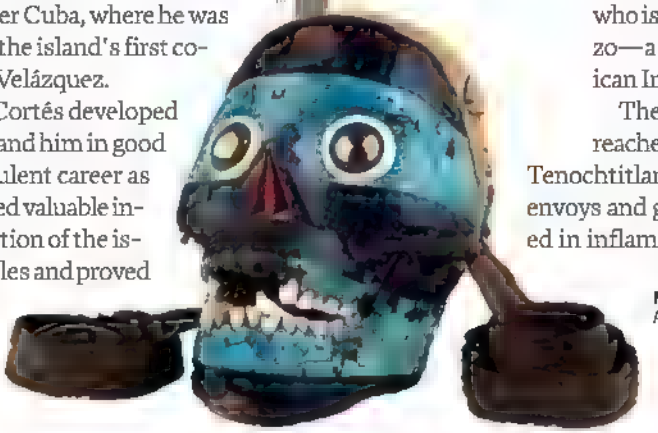
FACING an Aztec revolt, the Spanish flee Tenochtitlan during the Night of Sorrows. They regroup to defeat the Aztec at the Battle of Otumba.

HAVING LAID siege to Tenochtitlan, the city falls to Cortés at last. He takes Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc as his prisoner.

FACING charges of negligence, Cortés travels to Spain. After being appointed marquis by the king, he returns to the New World in 1530.

BACK IN Spain, Cortés tries to return to the Indies one last time. Suffering from poor health, he dies in 1547.

1547



MOSAIC MASK OF TURQUOISE AND LIGNITE COVERS A HUMAN SKULL AND REPRESENTS AN AZTEC GOD, TEZCATLIPOCA.

Veracruz, the city he founded on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, as rich as the mythical land where King Solomon obtained his gold. As a mark of his ruthlessness, and to quash any misgivings his crew may have had in disobeying the orders of Governor Velázquez, Cortés ordered the destruction of the fleet he had sailed with from Cuba. There was now no turning back.

Cortés had a talent for observing and manipulating local political rivalries. On the way to Tenochtitlan, the Spaniards gained the support of the Totonac peoples from the city of Cempoala, who hoped to be freed from the Aztec yoke. Following a military victory over another native people, the Tlaxcaltec, Cortés incorporated more warriors into his army. Knowledge of the divisions among different native peoples, and an unerring ability to exploit them, was central to Cortés's strategy.

The Aztec had allies too, however, and Cortés was especially belligerent toward them. The holy city of Cholula, which joined with Moctezuma in an attempt to stall the Spaniards, was sacked for two days at Cortés's command. After a grueling battle lasting more than five hours, as many as 6,000 of its people were killed. Cortés's forces seemed invincible. In the face of their unstoppable advance, Moctezuma stalled for time, allowing the Spaniards and their allies to enter Tenochtitlan unopposed in November 1519.

Fighting on Two Fronts

Fear gripped the huge Aztec capital on Cortés's entry, the chroniclers wrote: Its 250,000 inhabitants put up no resistance to Cortés's small force of a few hundred men and 1,000 Tlaxcaltec allies. At first Moctezuma formally received Cortés. Seeing the value of the emperor as a captive, Cortés seized him and guaranteed his power over the city.

Establishing a pattern that would recur throughout his career, Cortés soon found himself as much at threat from his own compatriots as from the peoples he was trying to subdue. At the beginning of 1520 he was forced to leave Tenochtitlan to deal with a punitive expedition sent from Cuba by the enraged Diego Velázquez. In his absence, Cortés left Tenochtitlan under the command of Pedro de Alvarado and a garrison of 80 Spaniards.

The Women in Cortés's Life

According to the chronicler Francisco López de Gómara, Cortés had a fondness for the ladies; he was "very given to women and always gave into temptation." His biography abounds in romantic entanglements. In 1504, for instance, he was unable to leave for the Indies because of the injuries he suffered after falling off a wall during a romantic tryst. Throughout his career, Cortés's eventful and colorful personal life revealed a manipulative streak. In 1514 he wooed a young Spanish woman named Catalina Suárez, a relative of Governor Diego Velázquez. Cortés might have been more interested in her family's connections and power than in her heart. After a prolonged courtship, the two married, and Cortés received a promotion. But Cortés would not prove faithful, especially after the conquest of Mexico. Malinche, an Aztec woman who served as his interpreter, also became his lover. She bore him a son. Catalina endured this and other infidelities, but her death ended the marriage. She was found dead in her own bed under mysterious circumstances in 1522. Cortés was suspected of her murder, but the charges against him were dropped. Cortés then took as a consort Princess Isabel Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor's daughter. She and Cortés had a daughter, but he later abandoned them. In 1529 Cortés took a Spanish noblewoman, Juana de Zúñiga, as his bride and became a marquis, securing both a high social status and a rather lecherous reputation.

MALINCHE AND CORTÉS IN MURALS DEPICTING MEXICAN HISTORY PAINTED BY DIEGO RIVERA, IN PALACIO NACIONAL, MEXICO CITY

CRONOZ/ALBUM

A *smallpox* epidemic prevented the Aztec from *finishing off* the defeated Spanish army. It gave Cortés enough time to regroup.

The hotheaded Alvarado lacked Cortes's skill and diplomacy. During Cortes's absence, Alvarado's execution of many Aztec chiefs enraged the people. After defeating Velázquez's forces, Cortés returned to Tenochtitlan on June 24, 1520, to find the city in revolt against his proxy. For several days, the Spaniards vainly used Moctezuma in an attempt to calm tempers, but his people pelted the puppet king with stones. Moctezuma died a few days later, but his successors would fare no better than he did.

On June 30, 1520, the Spanish fled the city under fire, suffering hundreds of casualties. Some Spaniards died by drowning in the surrounding marshes, weighed down by the vast amounts of treasure they were trying to carry off. The event would come to be known as the Night of Sorrows.

A smallpox epidemic prevented the Aztec forces from finishing off Cortés's defeated and demoralized army. The outbreak weakened the Aztec while giving Cortés time to regroup. Spain would win the Battle of Otumba a few days later. Skillful deployment of cavalry against the elite Aztec jaguar and eagle warriors carried the day for the Europeans and their allies. "Our only security, apart from God," Cortés wrote, "is our horses."

Victory allowed the Spaniards to rejoin with their Tlaxcaltec allies and launch the recapture of Tenochtitlan. Waves of attacks were launched on settlements near the Aztec capital. Any resistance was brutally crushed: Many indigenous enemies were captured as slaves and some were even branded following their capture. The sacking also allowed the Spaniards to build up their large personal retinues, taking captives to use as servants and slaves, and kidnapping others for exchanges and ransoms. Growing in number to roughly 3,000 people, this group of captives vastly outnumbered the fighting Spaniards.

Complete Devastation

For an assault on a city the size of Tenochtitlan, the number of Spanish troops seemed paltry—just under 1,000 soldiers, including harquebusiers, infantry, and cavalry. However, Cortés knew that

THE PATH

In 1519 Hernán Cortés's forces struck

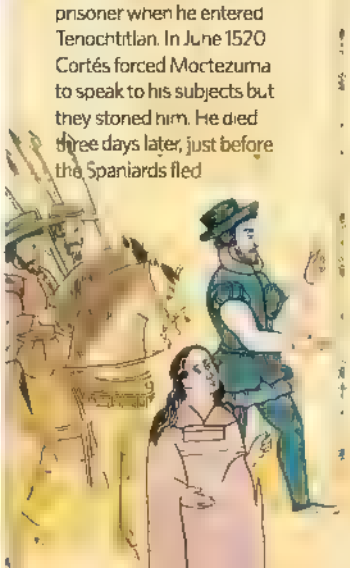
Emperor Moctezuma

Hernán Cortés took him prisoner when he entered Tenochtitlan. In June 1520 Cortés forced Moctezuma to speak to his subjects but they stoned him. He died three days later, just before the Spaniards fled

1

THE TLAXCALA ALLIANCE

Marching toward Tenochtitlan, Cortés assumed he had an alliance with the people of Tlaxcala, who were an enemy of the Aztec. However, the Tlaxcaltec fought the Spanish forces in a fierce, three-day battle after which the Tlaxcaltec decided to negotiate with Cortés. Xicoténcatl, Lord of Tlaxcala, agreed to deal with him, as his god had prophesied that "men would come from far-off lands from the direction in which the sun rises to rule over them." He offered the Spaniards 300 women, and Cortés gave them textiles and salt. Later, the Tlaxcaltec military assistance ultimately helped Cortés topple the Aztec Empire in 1521.



CORTÉS AND MALINCHE PARLEY WITH A TLAXCALTEC. ILLUSTRATION FROM HISTORY OF TLAXCALA CODEX

TO TENOCHTITLAN

into the Mexican interior seeking to capture Tenochtitlan, capital of the empire

2

THE CHOLULA MASSACRE

On leaving Tlaxcala, Cortés wanted to take Cholula, a city allied with Tenochtitlan. The Cholulteca let the Spaniards stay in their city but secretly planned to attack them. When Cortés discovered the plot, he summoned the city nobles to the courtyard of the Temple of Quetzalcoátl and warned them that in Spain the punishment for traitors was death. Then his soldiers fired their harquebuses at the assembled nobles. From there, the violence spiraled. Some sources speak of as many as two, four, or even six thousand dead in total.

SPANISH SOLDIERS ATTACKING THE NOBLES IN CHOLULA (HISTORY OF TLAXCALA)

3

THE NIGHT OF SORROWS

In June 1520 Cortés and his men (including the Tlaxcaltec) were besieged by the Aztec in their barracks in Tenochtitlan. On the night of June 30, they retreated in heavy rain, using a mobile bridge to cross the canals that cut across the road—but they were spotted, reportedly by a woman, who cried: "Captains, Mexicans, our enemies are leaving! Go and chase them." Hundreds of canoes came after them. Many Spaniards drowned in the canal and others were captured to be sacrificed. Up to 600 Spaniards died in what was the worst Spanish disaster in the conquest of Mexico.

AZTEC CAPTURE A SPANIARD ON THE NIGHT OF SORROWS. (HISTORY OF TLAXCALA)

4

THE FALL OF TENOCHTITLAN

Having regrouped, Cortés planned to capture Tenochtitlan. Two months into the siege, hunger ravaged the city's defenders while Spanish cavalry and Tlaxcaltec warriors killed hundreds of enemies every day. Cortés later wrote, on entering the city: "We found many piles of bodies in the streets; one could not help but step on them." Cuauhtémoc, the young Aztec emperor, was unable to mount an effective defense, and was captured. At first Cortés spared his life, but he had him killed three years later.

THE SURRENDER OF CUAUHTÉMOC TO CORTÉS (HISTORY OF TLAXCALA)

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: ART ARCHIVE AKG/ALBUM; PRISMA ARCHIVO/ALBUM; AKG/ALBUM

PUTTING ON A SHOW
Part of the Conquest of Mexico series at the Library of Congress, this painting depicts Aztec ambassadors observing maneuvers by Cortés's troops at Veracruz, a gesture combining diplomacy with an intimidating display of strength.

ERICH LESSING/ALBUM

The siege of *Tenochtitlan* was not a given. During fighting in July 1521, *the Aztec* even managed to capture Cortés himself.

his superior weaponry, coupled with the additional 50,000 warriors provided by his indigenous allies, would conquer the city, which was already weakened from starvation and thirst. In May 1521 the Spaniards had cut off the city's water supply by taking control of the Chapultepec aqueduct.

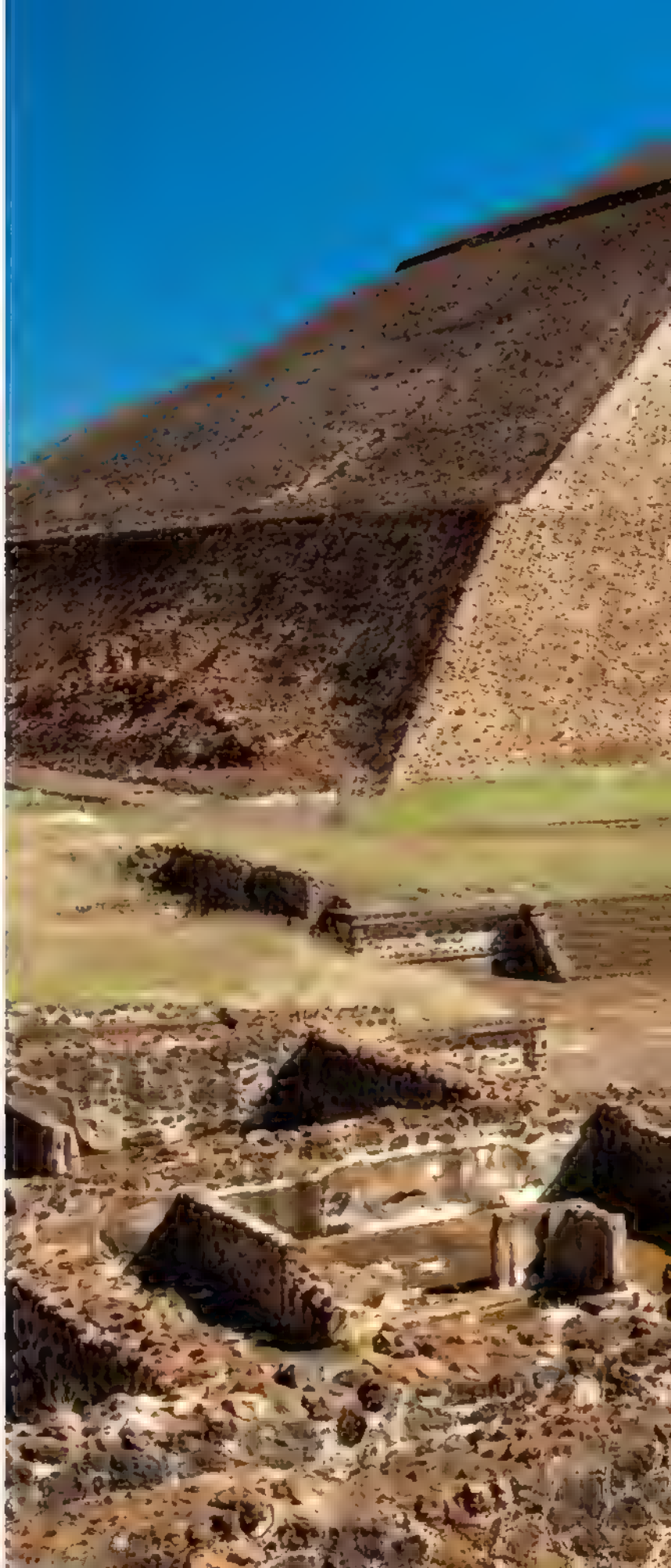
Even so, the siege of Tenochtitlan was not a given. During fighting in July 1521, the Aztec held strong, even capturing Cortés himself. Wounded in one leg, the Spanish leader was ultimately rescued by his captains. During this setback for the conquistador, the Aztec warriors managed to regain lost ground and rebuild the city's fortifications, pushing the Spanish onto the defensive for nearly three weeks. Cortés ordered the marshland to be filled with rubble for a final assault. Finally, on August 13, 1521, the city fell.

"Not a single stone remained left to burn and destroy," one witness wrote. The loss of human life was staggering, both in absolute figures and in its disproportionality. During the siege, around 100 Spaniards lost their lives compared to as many as 100,000 Aztec.

The conquest of Tenochtitlan and the subsequent consolidation of Spanish domination over the former Aztec Empire was the first major possession in what became the Spanish Empire. This vast territory would reach its greatest extent in the 18th century, with territory throughout North and South America.

Cortés's triumph would be short-lived. In just a few years, he would lose many of his lands in the New World. Despite being made a marquis years later, the Conqueror of Mexico did not have a glorious end. In 1547, at the age of 62, he died in a village near Sevilla, Spain, embroiled in lawsuits and his health broken by a series of disastrous expeditions. Decades of rapid expansion in the Americas seemed to have eclipsed his own exploits, and few bells tolled for the man whose ruthlessness and cunning transformed the Americas.

BERNAT HERNÁNDEZ
A SPECIALIST IN THE SPANISH EMPIRE, HERNÁNDEZ IS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY AT THE AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA, SPAIN.



TECHNOLOGY TRIUMPHS

Although the Aztec had the superior numbers, advanced Spanish weaponry ultimately gave them the upper hand. With firearms and steel blades at his disposal, just one Spaniard might annihilate dozens or even hundreds of opponents. "On a sudden, they speared and thrust people into shreds," wrote one indigenous chronicler, having witnessed the terrifying impact of European arms. "Others were beheaded in one swipe . . . Others tried to run in vain from the butchery, their innards falling from them and entangling their very feet."

THE SPANISH IRON AND STEEL

Crossbow
Made of two lengths of metal, it shot projectiles more than 1,000 feet
Armor
Linked steel plates offered almost complete protection from Aztec weapons.
Harquebus
Also called a hackbut, this early gun had a firing range of less than 650 feet
Cannon
Made of cast bronze and iron, its range was more than a mile
Gauntlet
Sword
Its long steel blade was sharp, light, and easy to handle
Powder flask
This was used to carry gunpowder for the harquebuses
Cuisse
Halberd
A deadly combination on a six-foot long spear and ax
Greave

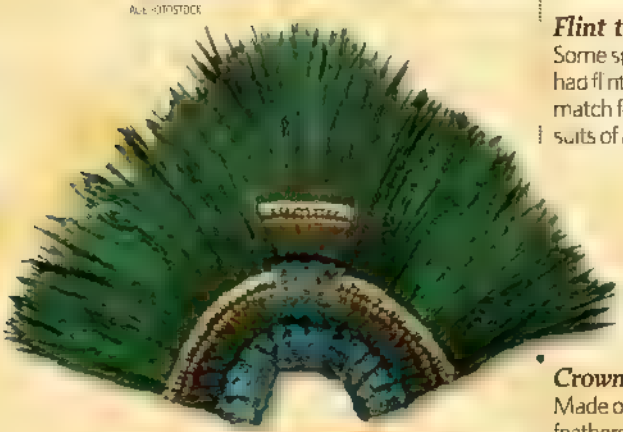
Superior Strategy

Aztec military tactics also put them at a disadvantage, even in situations where they seemed to have the advantage—such as in this engraving, where Aztec are besieging Spaniards in Moctezuma's palace. Unlike the Spanish, Aztec soldiers did not march in columns, nor did they charge or retreat in unison, making it hard for them to fight as one.

THE AZTEC STONE AND WOOD

Flint tip

Some spears had flint tips—no match for Spanish suits of armor



Crown

Made of quetzal feathers, gold, and precious stones, it is a royal headdress

Breastplate

Cotton-lined, it provided poor protection against Spanish weapons

Eagle-shaped helmet

Eagle warrior

Elite Aztec soldiers wielded spears or wooden clubs with obsidian tips

Light cuirass

Atlatl

A weapon like this could launch spears and darts at speeds up to 93 miles an hour

Eagle-talon adornment

Shield

Made of wood, leather, and feathers, it could not stand up to iron and steel

AMERICA'S FIRST SELF-MADE MAN

HAMILTON

Before becoming an American war hero, statesman, and financial genius, Alexander Hamilton was an immigrant. The story of his horrific youth and the obstacles he overcame reads like fiction—except it's all true.

Few figures in American history have aroused such visceral feelings as Alexander Hamilton. In his day, Hamilton's vision of American nationalism, with states subordinate to a strong central government and led by a vigorous executive branch, aroused fears of a reversion to royal British ways. For another group of naysayers, Hamilton's unswerving faith in a professional military converted him into a potential despot. Even some Hamilton admirers have been unsettled by a faint tincture of something foreign in this West Indian transplant.

In all probability, Alexander Hamilton is the foremost political figure in American history who never attained the presidency, yet he probably had a much deeper and more lasting impact than many who did. One of the prime movers behind the Constitutional Convention, main author of *The Federalist Papers*, and the first treasury secretary, Hamilton was a principal architect of the new government.

PORTRAIT OF A STATESMAN
John Trumbull painted Hamilton's likeness several times over the course of his life, but he painted this one shortly after Hamilton's death in 1804. Today it hangs in the New-York Historical Society.

Hamilton's Troubled Heritage

Circa 1718
The fourth son of 11 children, James Hamilton is born in Scotland. To find his own fortune, he leaves Scotland for St. Kitts in 1741.

Circa 1729
Rachel Faucette is born on the island of Nevis in the British West Indies. After her parents' formal separation, Rachel and her mother move to St. Croix.

1745
After her father's death, Rachel marries Johann Michael Lavien and has a son. Unable to endure a miserable marriage, in 1750 she abandons them for St. Kitts.

1750s
Rachel and James Hamilton meet and become romantically involved. They move to Nevis and have two sons together, James Jr. and Alexander.

1759
Johann Michael Lavien files a formal petition to divorce Rachel. After the divorce, he may marry, but Rachel is legally prohibited from doing so.

1760s
The Hamilton family relocates to St. Croix. James Hamilton abandons his family. Alexander never sees his father again.

1768
Rachel Lavien dies unexpectedly from a fever, effectively orphaning James Jr. and Alexander, who inherit nothing from her estate.

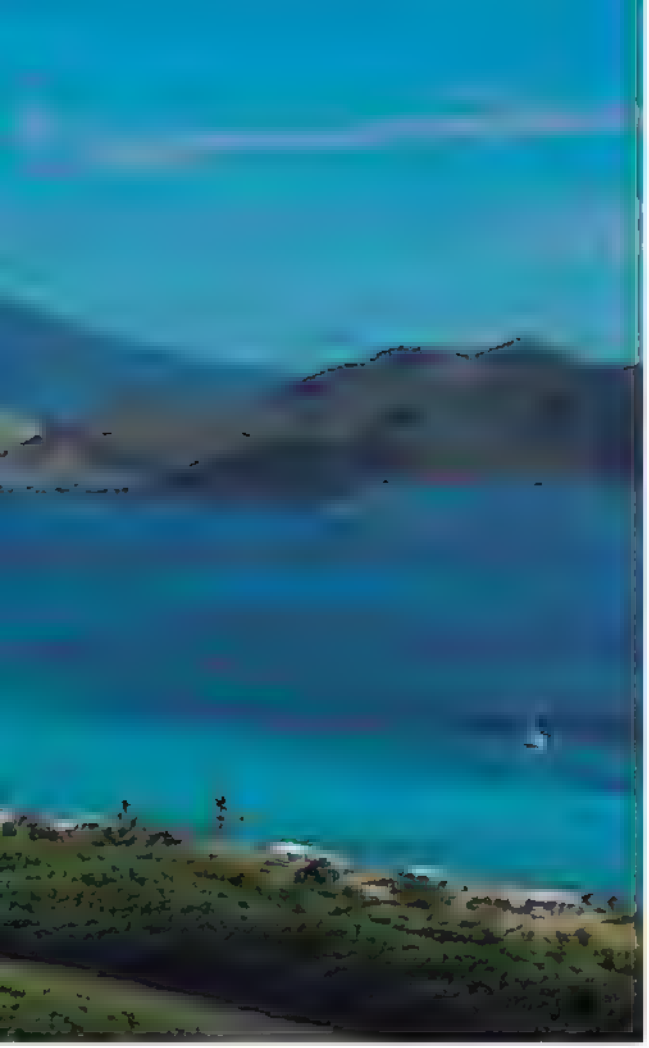
TWO ISLANDS, ONE NATION

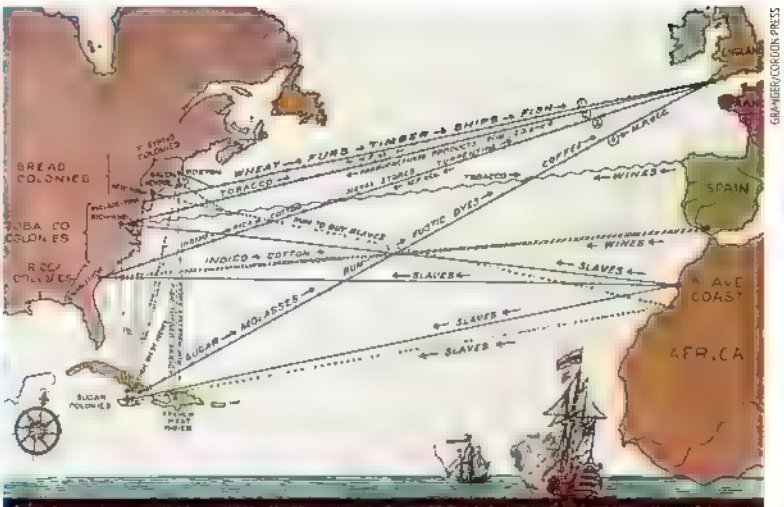
Hamilton's birthplace, Nevis rises beyond the shores of St. Kitts (above). These tiny Caribbean islands compose one nation, which declared its independence from Britain in 1983 but remains a member of the Commonwealth.

M. RUNKEL/CORBIS/CORDON PRESS

In contriving the smoothly running machinery of a modern nation-state—including a budget system, a funded debt, a tax system, a central bank, a customs service, and a coast guard, he set a high-water mark for administrative competence that has never been equaled. No other founder articulated such a clear and prescient vision of America's future political, military, and economic strength or crafted such ingenious mechanisms to bind the nation together. Today, we are indisputably the heirs to Hamilton's America, and to repudiate his legacy is, in many ways, to repudiate the modern world.

Hamilton's accomplishments are well documented, but his origins are not as well known. Hamilton was famously reticent about his private life, especially his squalid Caribbean boyhood. Taunted as a bastard throughout his life, Hamilton was understandably reluctant to chat about his childhood—"my birth is the subject of the most humiliating criticism," he wrote in one pained confession—and he turned his early family history into a taboo topic, alluded to in only a couple of cryptic letters.





GRANGER/CORDON PRESS

THE TRIANGLE TRADE

CARIBBEAN COLONIES held by Spain, France, England, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Denmark in the 1700s were at the center of the transatlantic slave trade. European ships traveled to Africa to exchange goods for slaves, who were taken to the colonies to be sold. Then slave traders returned to Europe with raw materials produced by the slaves. This inhumane system lasted for nearly 400 years and resulted in the largest forced migration in human history.

TRADE ROUTES BETWEEN EUROPE, THE COLONIES, AND AFRICA IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

Seen from a distance, his life embodies an enduring archetype: the obscure immigrant who comes to America, re-creates himself, and succeeds despite a lack of proper birth and breeding. No other founder had to grapple with such shame and misery, and his early years have remained wrapped in more mystery than those of any other major American statesman. Yet it is these early years where the forces that most shaped Hamilton can be found. The hardships he endured and the horrors he faced sculpted this man into one of the foremost Founding Fathers.

Island Life

Alexander Hamilton claimed Nevis in the British West Indies as his birthplace, although no surviving records substantiate this. For a long time, historians accepted 1757 as the date of Hamilton's birth; it was the year used by Hamilton himself and his family. Yet several cogent pieces of evidence have caused many recent historians to opt for 1755. To modern eyes, Nevis may seem like a sleepy backwater, but in the 18th century, this West Indian setting was the crossroads where European powers vied for mastery of the lucrative sugar trade. The small, scattered islands of the Caribbean generated more wealth for Britain than all of her North American colonies combined.

The sudden popularity of sugar, dubbed "white gold," engendered a brutal world of overnight fortunes in which slavery proved indispensable. Thousands of blacks were shipped from slave-trading forts in West Africa to cultivate Nevis and the neighboring islands. British authorities also colonized Nevis with vagabonds, criminals, and other riffraff swept from the London streets to work as indentured servants or overseers. While other Founding Fathers were reared in tidy New England villages or cosseted on baronial Virginia estates, Hamilton grew up in a tropical hellhole of dissipated whites and fractious slaves, all framed by a backdrop of luxuriant natural beauty.

NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER

Alexander Hamilton told people he was born in 1757, but historians have found some evidence that he was two years older than he claimed

GRANGER/CORDON PRESS

YOUNG ALEXANDER? A PORTRAIT IDENTIFIED AS HAMILTON

A MOTHER'S PRISON

Overlooking Gallows Bay, St. Croix, Fort Christiansvaern (above) was a miserable place to live for Rachel Lavien. Hamilton's mother spent months inside while imprisoned for adultery.

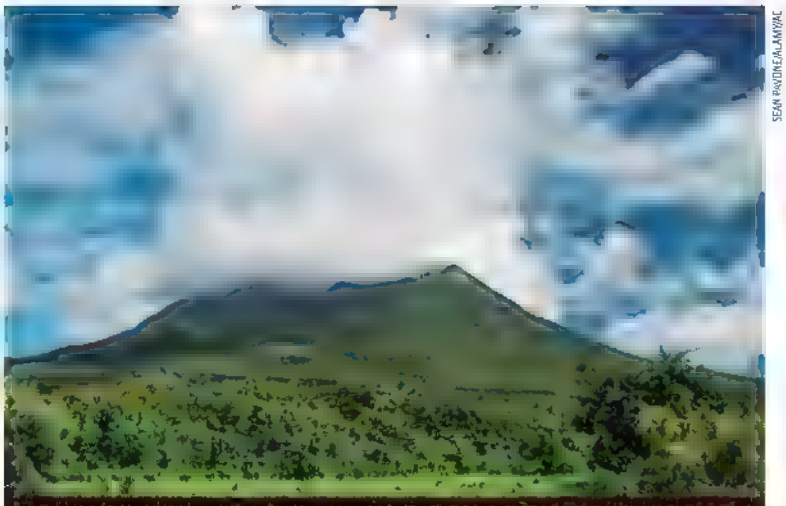
MICHELE FALZONE/AWL IMAGES

Unhappy Unions

Alexander Hamilton's maternal grandparents, John Faucette and Mary Uppington, married on August 21, 1718. The family owned a small sugar plantation in Nevis and had at least seven slaves. They produced seven children, but only two survived to adulthood, Rachel, Hamilton's mother born circa 1729, and her much older sister, Ann. The Faucettes' marriage didn't last, however, and they separated in 1740. In their settlement, they agreed to "live separately and apart for the rest of their lives," and Mary renounced all rights to her husband's property in exchange for an inadequate annuity of 53 pounds. Because her mother had surrendered all claims to John Faucette's money, 16-year-old Rachel Faucette achieved the sudden glow of a minor heiress in 1745 when her father died and left her all his property.

Rachel and her mother relocated to St. Croix, where her sister Ann and her husband James Lytton lived outside the capital, Christiansted. The Lyttons likely introduced them to another newcomer from Nevis, a Dane named Johann Michael Lavien, a peddler who aspired to planter status. Rachel Faucette's inheritance must have attracted Lavien, who saw it as a fresh source of ready cash. For Alexander Hamilton, Lavien was the certified ogre of his family saga. "In compliance with the wishes of her mother . . . but against her own inclination," Hamilton stated, the 16-year-old Rachel agreed to marry the older Lavien, her senior by at least a dozen years. In Hamilton's blunt estimation, it was "a hated marriage," as the daughter of one unhappy union was rushed straight into another.

In 1745 the newlyweds set up house on a modest plantation. The following year the teenage bride gave birth to a son, Peter. In 1748 Lavien bought a half share in another small sugar plantation, enlarging his debt, frittering away Rachel's fast-dwindling inheritance, and straining the union. The marriage deteriorated to the point where the headstrong wife simply abandoned the house around 1750. Enraged, Lavien sought to humiliate his unruly bride. Seizing on a Danish law that allowed a husband to jail his wife if she was twice found guilty of adultery



SEAN PAVONE/ALAMY/AC

POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE

THE SMALL CARIBBEAN island of Nevis, the location that Alexander Hamilton claimed as his birthplace, is dominated by Nevis Peak, a stratovolcano looming more than 3,000 feet above the island's tranquil beaches. The volcano has not erupted for millennia, but it isn't entirely dormant. Bubbling hot springs and steaming fumaroles around the island indicate that volcanic activity still persists beneath the ground.

OBSCURED BY CLOUDS THE TOP OF NEVIS PEAK IS OFTEN HIDDEN FROM SIGHT.

and no longer resided with him, he had Rachel clapped into the town jail where she spent several months in a dank, cramped cell.

Lavien must have imagined that when Rachel was released that she would now tamely submit to his autocratic rule, but he failed to reckon on her invincible spirit. Solitude had only stiffened her resolve. After Rachel left the jail, she fled to St. Kitts, abandoning her husband and son. In doing so, she relinquished the future benefits of a legal separation and inadvertently doomed the unborn Alexander to illegitimacy.

The Scottish Side

Hamilton's other star-crossed parent, James Hamilton, was born around 1718, to the 14th laird in the so-called Cambuskeith line of Hamiltons. As Alexander must have heard ad nauseam in his boyhood, the Cambuskeith Hamiltons possessed a coat of arms and for centuries had owned a castle near Kilmarnock called the Grange in Stevenston Parish in Ayrshire, Scotland, southwest of Glasgow.

As the fourth son of 11 children, James Hamilton had little chance of becoming laird of Grange and was expected to fend for himself. His eldest brother, John, laird of Grange, was an active, enterprising man intensely involved in the banking, shipping, and textile business revolutionizing Glasgow. In November 1737 John Hamilton took the affable but feckless James, then 19, and steered him into a four-year apprenticeship in the textile trade. Despite being part of a promising, yet challenging, new industry, James did not stick with the business. When the agreement expired in 1741, James Hamilton decided to test his luck in St. Kitts.

Trading sugar or plantation supplies in the West Indies was hazardous to those with skimpy capital. The slightest error in calculation or payment delay could swamp a trader in catastrophic losses. Some such fate probably overtook James Hamilton, who faltered quickly and had to be rescued repeatedly by his brother John

SWEET CROP, BITTER LEGACY

Europe's sweet tooth made sugarcane one of the most lucrative exports from the Caribbean colonies, which relied on the labor of enslaved people to grow and harvest the crop

STOCKFOOD/ALAMY/AC

HAMILTON IN NEVIS

This dwelling (above) near the harbor in Charlestown, Nevis, may—or may not—sit on Hamilton's birthplace. Today it houses a history museum on the first floor and the Nevis House of Assembly on the second.

ANDREW WOODLEY/ALAMY/AC

and his Glasgow friends. "In capacity of a merchant he went to St. Kitts, where from too generous and too easy a temper he failed in business and at length fell into indigent circumstances," his son Alexander wrote in tactful tones. He spoke of his father in a forgiving style and saw him as amiable but lazily inept.

Family Affairs

By the time Rachel met James Hamilton in St. Kitts in the early 1750s, a certain symmetry had shaped their lives. They were both scarred by early setbacks, had suffered a vertiginous descent in social standing, and had grappled with the terrors of downward economic mobility. Each would have been excluded from the more rarefied society of the British West Indies and tempted to choose a mate from the limited population of working whites. Their liaison was the sort of match that could easily produce a son hypersensitive about class and status and painfully conscious that social hierarchies ruled the world.

To obtain a divorce in the crown colonies was an expensive, tortuous affair, and this reality deprived James and Rachel of any chance to legitimize their match. Putting the best face on the embarrassing situation, Alexander sometimes pretended that his parents had married. Since the relationship may have lasted 15 years, it presumably took on the trappings of a marriage, enabling Alexander to maintain that his illegitimacy was a mere legal technicality. Indeed, Hamilton's parents, though a common-law couple, presented themselves as James and Rachel Hamilton. They had two sons: James Jr., and, two years later, Alexander.

From her father, Rachel had inherited a waterfront property on the main street in Charlestown, the Nevis capital, where legend proclaims that Alexander was born and lived as a boy. Appropriately enough, this boy destined to be America's foremost Anglophile entered the world as a British subject. He was slight and thin shouldered and distinctly Scottish in appearance, with a florid complexion, reddish brown hair, and sparkling violet-blue eyes. Hamilton probably did not have formal schooling on Nevis—his illegitimate birth may well have barred

BUDDY MAYS/ALAMY/AE

ALL ABOUT THE HAMILTONS

ALEXANDER HAMILTON always had a special relationship with money. His face has graced U.S. paper currency since the 1860s, but in 2015, the U.S. Treasury announced plans to redesign the ten-dollar bill, where Hamilton currently appears. One of the possible new design ideas is to feature an important American woman on the bill in addition to Hamilton's portrait. Hamilton fans can look forward to the new ten-dollar look when it debuts in 2020.

THE CLASSIC TEN-DOLLAR BILL WILL GET A NEW FACE IN 2020.

him from Anglican instruction—but he seems to have had individual tutoring.

Like everyone in the West Indies, Hamilton had extensive early exposure to blacks. In this highly stratified society, with its many gradations of caste and color, even poor whites owned slaves and hired them out for extra income. Young Hamilton would regularly have passed the slave-auction blocks at Market Shop and Crosses Alley and beheld barbarous whippings in the public square. The 8,000 captive blacks easily dwarfed in number the 1,000 whites, "a disproportion," remarked one visitor, "which necessarily converts all such white men as are not exempted by age and decrepitude into a well-regulated militia."

Violence was commonplace in Nevis, as in all the slave-ridden sugar islands. The Caribbean sugar economy was a system of inimitable savagery. The mortality rate of slaves hacking away at sugarcane under a pitiless tropical sun was simply staggering: Three out of five died within five years of arrival. One Nevis planter, Edward Huggins, set a sinister record when he administered 365 lashes to a male slave and 292 to a female. Evidently unfazed by this sadism, a local jury acquitted him of all wrongdoing. Island life contained enough bloodcurdling scenes to darken Hamilton's vision for life, instilling an ineradicable pessimism about human nature that infused all his writing.

Abandoned and Alone

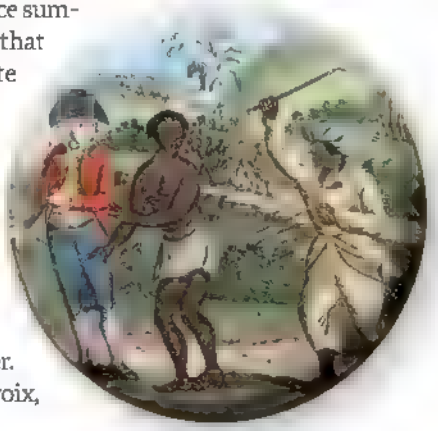
Nine years after Rachel had fled St. Croix, Lavien resurfaced in 1759. Looking to take a new wife, Lavien needed to obtain an official divorce summons from Rachel. He noted bitterly that he "had taken care of Rachel's legitimate child from what little he has been able to earn," whereas she had "completely forgotten her duty and let husband and child alone and instead given herself up to whoring with everyone." After this vicious indictment, Lavien demanded that Rachel be denied all legal rights to his property, which would be preserved for their son, 13-year-old Peter.

Summoned to appear in court in St. Croix,

BARBARIC TACTICS

In the West Indies European settlers lived in fear of slave revolts and relied on sadistic physical punishments, such as flogging (below), to subdue male and female slaves

GRANGER/CORDON PRESS



SOLID REMINDERS

In the 18th century St. Croix had more than 200 sugar p antat ons, many with their own mi s to crush the cane after harvest ng. Most plantations are gone, but ruins of the mills (above) remain

LEON WERDINGER/ALAMY/AC

Rachel did not show up or refute the allegations. On June 25, Lavien received a divorce that permitted him to remarry, while Rachel was strictly prohibited from doing so. In one swiftly effective stroke, Lavien had safeguarded his son's inheritance and made it impossible for Rachel to remove the stigma of illegitimacy from her other sons.

In 1765 the Hamilton family moved back to St. Croix after James Hamilton received a business assignment in Christiansted in April. Stripped of whatever cover of legitimacy had sheltered them, it would have become glaringly evident to Alexander and James Jr. for the first time that their mother had been a notorious woman. Soon after the move, the Hamilton boys were dealt the first of several crushing blows when their father deserted his family forever. Alexander offered a forgiving but plausible reason for his father's desertion: he could no longer afford to support his family. Because James Jr., 12, and Alexander, 10, had attained an age where they could assist Rachel, James Sr. may have believed that he could wash his hands of paternal duties without undue pangs of guilt. Alexander probably never set eyes again on his vagabond father, who stayed in the Caribbean. Father and son never entirely lost touch with each other, but a curious psychological and geographical distance separated them.

Soon after the move, the Hamilton boys were dealt the first of several crushing blows when their father deserted his family forever.

Rachel's return to St. Croix had probably been premised on support from her sister Ann and brother-in-law, a hope that never quite panned out. As prominent sugar planters, the Lyttons had enjoyed success at first, but a business scandal forced them to move back to Nevis in late 1765, just months after Rachel and her two boys arrived in St. Croix. Within one year, Ann Lytton was dead, leaving Rachel as the last surviving Faucette.

GRANGER/CORDON PRESS

THE
ROYAL DANISH
AMERICAN GAZETTE.

VOL. I. WEDNESDAY, January 23. 1771 No. 58.

Just imported from the Windward Coast of Africa, and to be sold on Monday next, by
Messrs. Kortright & Cruger,
Acting Brokers here,
Three Hundred Prime
S L A V E S.

*** The terms will be made known at the place of sale.
Jan. 23. 1771.

BY PERMISSION.
JOHN SMITH,
Now DANCING MASTER,

BY PERMISSION.
At the THEATRE in Bris-End,
On Monday Evening, 28th January,
Will be presented a TRAGEDY, call'd
The REVENGE.
Zanga, a Captive Moor, by Mr. HILL.
Don Manuel, a gentleman for his amusement.
To which will be added a FARCE, call'd
ÆSOP in the SHADES.
With the additional Scene of Lady Crackbrain, written by DAVID GARRICK, Esq; Lord Chalkstone, by Mr. HILL.
To begin at Six o'Clock.
*** TICKETS to be had at the Printing-Office, at the Taverns and the door of the Theatre, at TWELVE SHILLINGS each.
VIVAT REX & REGINA.

TAKEN up on the estate of Peter Wood, Esq; a brown HORSE. This is to give notice, that the Owner may have him by coming to the Manager of the estate and paying the expence of this advertisement.
WILLIAM HAYN.
Jan. 23. 1771.

RUN AWAY,
From Mary Alexander, [illegible],
A Negro Fisherman, named Peter, formerly the property of Mrs. Hamps. Whoever will bring the said Negroe to his Mistress shall receive Five Pieces of Eight reward. All people are hereby forbid to employ or harbour the said Negroe as they may depend on being prosecuted according to law.
Jan. 23. 1771.

MED TILLADELSE.
JOHN SMITH,
TAGER sig herved den Ære at bekiendtgiøre S. T. Eiere-Raad Fredericus Christian Moth, der boye Secret Raad

At Publick Auction will be sold by the Subscribers, in their house at St. Tho-

To be rented, or sold, on reasonable terms,
TWO HOUSES, and LAND thereto belonging, the property of the subscriber, being completely accommodated with all necessary Out-houses, Oven, &c. situated at the corner Lot, King's three [illegible] the Sunday Market. Also to be [illegible] cheap cash, or reasonable credit, twenty [illegible] &c.
JNº MANEVILLE.
Christiansted, Jan. 18, 1771.

PETERSBURGH [illegible]
THE joy produced [illegible] of the Russian arms [illegible] Turks, has on a sudden been occasioned by a cloud that overspreads the court, and covers all the transactions of the Imperial palace with impenetrable darkness. Nothing yet has passed to the publick but a vague and confused report of something designed, and something discovered. Nothing is positively known to certainty, but that the [illegible] of the 4th of October, the countess Czernichoff and the countess D'Algarotti were each [illegible] and [illegible], in their own apartments, and carried prisoners to different [illegible] where none are permitted to know their fate. On the next morning several of the nobles attending on the person of the Empress were ordered to retire from the court, and confine themselves either to their own houses in distant parts of the empire, or to different towns named by her Imperial Majesty. So [illegible] revolution in the fortune of many people has [illegible] to every different conjectures and reports. Some have [illegible] very dangerous correspondence has been discovered between the countess D'Algarotti and the king of Prussia, while others no less sagacious [illegible] that it happened [illegible] Heraclius. Some whisper that the Swedes had formed a design to [illegible] Empress and enforce the [illegible] Prince. However this be, the [illegible] have been changed,

PROLIFIC POLITICIAN AND POET

O SAY ALEXANDER HAMILTON had a way with words would be a gross understatement. He was a prolific writer, gifted with an almost unmatched ability to communicate by putting a pen to paper. Famous for his political writings, few know that Hamilton was also a poet. As a young man in St. Croix, he published his poetry in the local paper, the *Royal Danish American Gazette*. In 1771 he published a pair of love poems in the paper, one devoted to pure, idealized love and the other to lust. After he moved to the colonies, Hamilton used poetry to woo his wife, Elizabeth "Eliza" Schuyler. She loved these poems so much that she kept one in a little bag she wore around her neck until her death at age 97.

ROYAL DANISH AMERICAN GAZETTE, ST. CROIX'S LOCAL NEWSPAPER, IN WHICH HAMILTON PUBLISHED HIS POETRY

Rachel soldiered on in the face of hardship. She took a two-story house on 34 Company Street where she and her two boys lived upstairs. The living quarters held 34 books—the first unmistakable sign of Hamilton's omnivorous, self-directed reading. On the first floor, Rachel ran a store stocked with merchandise purchased from two young New York merchants, David Beekman and Nicholas Cruger, who had just inaugurated a trading firm that was to transform Hamilton's insecure, claustrophobic boyhood. Because her mother had died, Rachel now owned five adult female slaves and further supplemented her income by hiring them out.

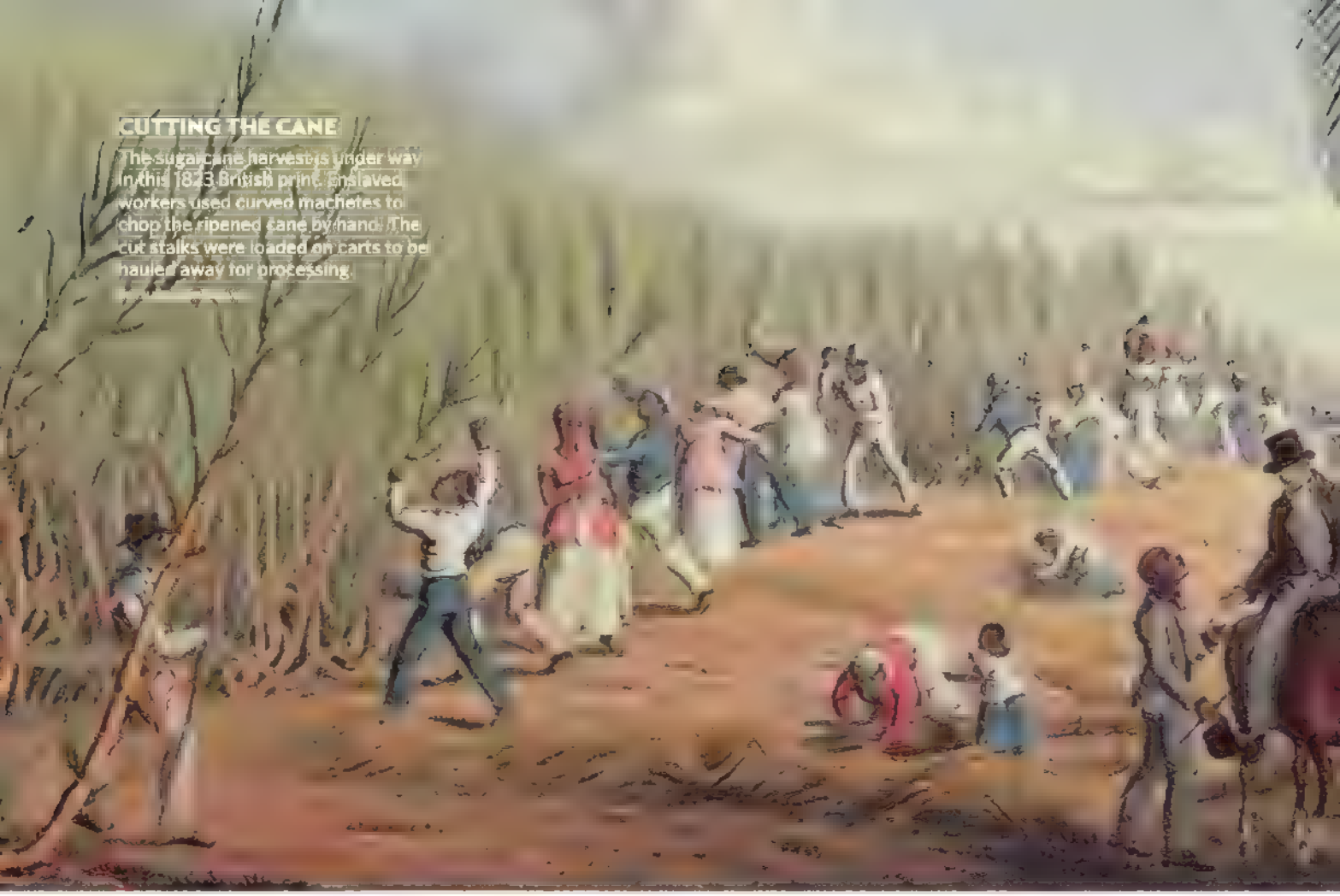
In early 1768 tragedy struck again. Rachel, 38, succumbed to a raging fever, and Alexander, too, contracted the unspecified disease. Mother and son must have been joined in a horrid scene as they lay side by side in a feverish state in the single upstairs bed. The delirious Alexander was probably writhing inches from his mother when she expired. Soon after her death, agents from the probate court hastened to the scene and sequestered the property. The court decided that it had to consider three possible heirs: Peter and the Hamilton brothers. The whole marital scandal was dredged up again, only now at an age when Alexander and his brother could fully fathom its meaning. At a probate hearing, Lavien lambasted Alexander and James as children born in "whoredom," insisting that his son merited the entire estate, even though Peter hadn't set eyes on his mother for 18 years. The court sided with Lavien, and the whole estate was awarded to Peter.

The Hamilton brothers were then placed under the legal guardianship of their 32-year-old first cousin Peter Lytton, but their time with him would be short. On July 16, 1769, Peter Lytton committed suicide. His will left nothing to Alexander or James. When James Lytton appeared to claim his son's estate, he tried to aid the boys but was stymied

A WELL-USED WRITING DESK

Hamilton may have done much of his writing on a portable desk (below). Over the course of his life, Hamilton's written output was tremendous. His collected papers take up 27 volumes, more than 16,000 pages total

GRANGER/CORDON PRESS



CUTTING THE CANE
The sugarcane harvest is under way in this 1823 British print. Enslaved workers used curved machetes to chop the ripened cane by hand. The cut stalks were loaded on carts to be hauled away for processing.

by legal obstacles resulting from the suicide. On August 12, 1769, less than one month after Peter's death, the heartbroken James Lytton died as well. Five days earlier, he had drafted a new will, which also made no provision for his nephews.

Let us pause briefly to tally the catalog of disasters that had befallen these two boys between 1765 and 1769: Their father vanished, their mother died, their cousin and supposed protector committed suicide, and their aunt, uncle, and grandmother all died. James, 16, and Alexander, 14, were now left alone. At every step in their rootless, topsy-turvy existence, they had been surrounded by failed, broken, embittered people. Their short lives had been shadowed by a stupefying sequence of bankruptcies, marital separations, deaths, scandals, and disinheritance.

Such repeated shocks must have stripped Alexander Hamilton of any sense that life was fair, that he existed in a benign universe, or that he could ever count on help from anyone. That this abominable childhood produced such a strong, productive, self-reliant human being—that this fatherless adolescent could have ended up a founding father of a country he had not yet even seen—seems little short of miraculous.

THE COST OF ESCAPE
Runaway slaves faced severe penalties if they were caught. Repeat offenders might have to wear metal neck shackles (below) as punishment

M. GRAHAM-STEWART/BRIDGEMAN/AL

Business School

After Peter Lytton's death, James was apprenticed to a carpenter, while Alexander went to live with a well-respected merchant and his family. Before Peter Lytton's death, Alexander had begun to clerk for the mercantile house of Beekman and Cruger, the New York traders who had supplied his mother with provisions.

Beekman and Cruger ran an export-import business, a perfect place for Hamilton to experience the fast-paced world of trading. His first job afforded him valuable insights into global commerce and the mercantilist policies that governed European economies. Hamilton had to monitor inventory, mind money, chart courses

GEOPHOTOS ©DLI.DIAS/ALAMY.NE

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

THE SECOND COUNTRY IN THE AMERICAS to overthrow colonial rule, Haiti established its independence from France in 1804 after more than a decade of conflict. A series of slave revolts in 1791 sparked the revolution, during which rebel leader Toussaint Louverture appealed to the United States for support. In 1799 Secretary of State Timothy Pickering worked closely with Alexander Hamilton on a governing plan that would deeply influence Haiti's constitution.

TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE HAMILTON ADMIRED TOUSSAINT, A FORMER SLAVE AND REVOLUTIONARY.

for ships, keep track of freight, and compute prices in an exotic blend of currencies, including Portuguese coins, Spanish pieces of eight, British pounds, Danish ducats, and Dutch stivers.

Through his internship, Hamilton saw that business was often obstructed by scarce cash or credit and learned the value of a uniform currency in stimulating trade. Finally, he was forced to ponder the paradox that the West Indian islands, with all their fertile soil, traded at a disadvantage with the rest of the world because of their reliance on only the sugar crop. It may be that Hamilton's preference for a diversified economy of manufacturing and agriculture originated in his youthful reflections on the avoidable poverty he had witnessed in the Caribbean.

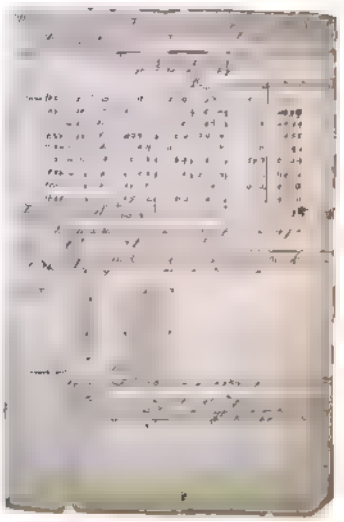
At least once a year the firm handled a large shipment of slaves. On January 23, 1771, during Hamilton's tenure, it imported 300 slaves from Africa. The following year, Cruger imported 250 more. It is hard to grasp Hamilton's later politics without contemplating the raw cruelty that he witnessed as a boy that later deprived him of the hopefulness so contagious in the American milieu. On the most obvious level, the slave trade generated a permanent detestation of the system and resulted in his later abolitionist efforts. But something deeper may have seeped into his consciousness. In this hierarchical world, skittish planters lived in constant dread of slave revolts and fortified their garrison state to avert them. Even when he left for America, Hamilton carried a heavy dread of anarchy and disorder that always struggled with his no less active love of liberty. Perhaps the true legacy of his boyhood was an equivocal one: He came to detest the tyranny embodied by the planters and their authoritarian rule while also fearing the potential uprisings of the disaffected slaves. The twin specters of despotism and anarchy were to haunt him for the rest of his life.

The Hurricane

Hamilton then had the good fortune to meet a Presbyterian minister named Hugh Knox. We do not know exactly how they met, but Knox threw

HUMAN CARGO

This Royal African Company ledger (below) records the number of enslaved Africans transported to the West Indies from 1680 to 1688. Only about 47,000 survived out of the 60,000 taken.



MARY EVANS/SUE-A FLORENCE

BANK MANAGER

Alexander Hamilton's bronze statue stands outside the U.S. Treasury Building in Washington, D.C. James Earle Fraser sculpted the likeness, which was dedicated in 1923 to honor the first U.S. treasury secretary.

HISHAM IBRAHIM/AGE FOTOSTOCK

open his library to this prodigious youth and prodded him toward scholarship. Knox had an accurate intuition that this adolescent was fated to accomplish great deeds, although he later confessed that Alexander Hamilton had outstripped even his loftiest expectations.

Knox also occasionally filled in for the editor of the *Royal Danish American Gazette,* the local newspaper launched in 1770. Knox's side job proved highly consequential for Hamilton after a massive hurricane tore through St. Croix on the night of August 31, 1772, and carved a wide swath of destruction through nearby islands. Hamilton composed a long, feverish letter to his father, trying to convey the hurricane's horror. He must have shown the letter to Knox, who persuaded him to publish it in the Gazette, where it appeared on October 3. Hamilton did not know it, but he had just written his way out of poverty.

For all its bombastic excesses, the letter shows how a 17-year-old self-educated clerk could write with verve and gusto. Clearly, Hamilton was highly literate and already had a considerable fund of verbal riches: "It seemed as if a total dissolution of nature was taking place. The roaring of the sea and wind, fiery meteors flying about it [sic] in the air, the prodigious glare of almost perpetual lightning, the crash of the falling houses, and the ear-piercing shrieks of the distressed, were sufficient to strike astonishment into angels."

His hurricane letter generated such a sensation—even the island's governor inquired after the young author's identity—that a subscription fund was taken up by local businessmen to send this promising youth to North America to be educated.

BRIDGEMAN/ACI

SILVER COOLER A GIFT TO HAMILTON FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON

Setting Sail

In the standard telling of his life, Hamilton boards a ship in October 1772 and sails off forever. Yet a close study of the *Royal Danish American Gazette* and other documents bolsters the supposition that Hamilton spent the winter of 1772-73 in St. Croix before departing.

JARVIS/CORDON PRESS

MRS. HAMILTON, I PRESUME

THE DAUGHTER OF a prominent wealthy New York family, Elizabeth Schuyler captured the heart of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton wed "Eliza" in 1780, and they had eight children together. After Hamilton's untimely death at age 49, Eliza became the protector of his legacy and aimed to produce a biography to secure his place in history. Her son John Church Hamilton took on the project and carried it to completion, finishing it seven years after Eliza's death in 1854.

ELIZABETH SCHUYLER HAMILTON ARTIST RALPH EARL PAINTED ELIZA'S PORTRAIT IN 1787.

Alexander Hamilton bore a world of scarred emotion and secret grief with him on the boat to Boston. He took his unhappy boyhood, tucked it away in a mental closet, and never opened the door again. He chose a psychological strategy adopted by many orphans and immigrants: He cut himself off from his past and forged a new identity. He would find a home where he would be accepted for what he did, not for who he was, and where he would no longer labor in the shadow of illegitimacy. His relentless drive, his wretched feelings of shame and degradation, and his precocious self-sufficiency combined to produce a young man with an insatiable craving for success. As much as Hamilton sought to forget his childhood, he could not deny its influence on his life. Shaped by the harsh circumstances of his youth, he came to the colonies well prepared to fight, to endure, and to design a new nation. ■

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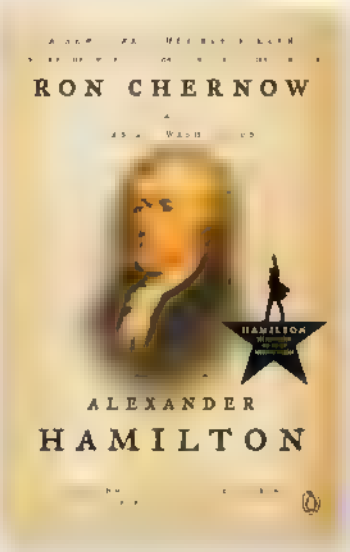
About the Author

RON CHERNOW is the Pulitzer Prize–winning author of five previous books. His first, *The House of Morgan*, won the National Book Award. His books *Alexander Hamilton* and *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.*, were both nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award in biography. *Washington: A Life* received the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for biography. His best-selling biography of Alexander Hamilton, from which portions of this article were excerpted, inspired the smash Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Chernow lives in Brooklyn, New York.



Ron Chernow
ALEXANDER HAMILTON
Penguin, 2004
832 pp

RAISING CANE

When Alexander Hamilton was growing up in Nevis and St. Croix, sugar was the most popular agricultural export from the Caribbean colonies. European planters built fortunes from the hard work of thousands of enslaved Africans who planted, grew, harvested, and processed the sugarcane. A typical estate consisted of numerous buildings, some of which housed residents and workers, whereas others were for storage and refining.

CRUELTY IN PARADISE 19TH-CENTURY COLOR ENGRAVING OF A SUGAR PLANTATION IN THE ANTILLES, BY PAOLO FUMAGALLI

IN THE CARIBBEAN

❶ The Great House
Planters and their famil es ived n a centra y located house Often these homes had two stor es, the lower made of stone and the upper of wood. To keep cool, there were many windows for vent lat on and shutters to block out the hot sun.

❷ The Slave Village
The plantat on's abor force ved and worked on the estate. Typica y their quarters were cabins located c ose to the fields and other working buildings, such as the m ls, and the overseer's quarters, to prevent runaways.

❸ The Fields
To maxim ze output, large swaths of land were set as de for cultivat on. Enslaved workers harvested the r pened sugarcane w th machetes. The cane had to be transported to the m l within 36 hours of cutt ng or else it would rot.

❹ The Works
Many plantations had sugar processing facilities on site. First, at the m ll the cane would be crushed and juice extracted. Next, the cane juice was ref ned at the boi ng and curing house, in a process that eventually produced sugar and mo asses.

The Oseberg Ship: A Wooden Tomb For a Viking Queen?

In 1904 a Viking ship covered with carvings was found buried on a Norwegian farm. On board were the bodies of two richly clad women, surrounded by household goods. Were these women royalty, priestesses, servants, or sacrificial victims?

During the late 19th century, a young Norwegian farmer, Johannes Hansen, arrived in the United States where—like many Scandinavians of the period—he had high hopes of starting a new life. However, an encounter with a fortune-teller there made him change his plans. He learned that he need not suffer hardships in America to get rich because hidden on his farm back home was a great treasure.

This fateful encounter, described in a 1930 compilation of local history of Oseberg in southern Norway, may be nothing more than a yarn. But it reveals the

intrigue and legends that surround one of the most exciting discoveries from the Viking age.

Hansen returned to Oseberg. He started to excavate a curious mound on his land but found nothing. He halted his dig, believing the mound to be the burial site of Black Death victims from the 1349 epidemic.

Hansen and his neighbors had good reason to suspect there might be important archaeological sites in the area. In 1879 two teenagers in Gokstad, a town in the same region of Vestfold as Oseberg, discovered the burial place of a ninth-century Viking prince. The mysterious mound had also yielded a fantastic discovery: an entire wooden Viking ship encased in the dirt.

An Expert Arrives

In 1903 Knut Rom, one of Hansen's neighbors, bought the Oseberg farm. Rom continued to search the property and soon did find something. A wooden fragment measuring only eight inches, it was a small find that heralded something much bigger.

Sixty miles away, in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, Rom approached Professor Gabriel Gustafson of the University Museum of National Antiquities, who had a reputation for being

SLOW REVEAL Professor Gustafson and his team carefully excavated the ship from the Oseberg burial mound in 1904.

Late 1800s **Johannes Hansen,** a tenant farmer, carries out some amateur excavations on the Oseberg farm.

1903 **Knut Rom** buys the Oseberg farm. He recovers a fragment of the ship's prow during his excavations.

1904–07 Gabriel Gustafson excavates a funerary ship, uncovering the remains of two high-ranking women.

1926–29 **The Viking Ship Museum** is built in Oslo. The Oseberg ship is exhibited there, along with the Gokstad ship.

NORWEGIAN WOOD A CARVED HEAD ON THE FUNERARY CART FOUND AT OSEBERG

OVE HOLST/UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

IMAGE COLLECTION

somewhat haughty. At first it seemed the veteran archaeologist might dismiss this farmer out of hand—but after Rom presented the wooden fragment, Gustafson marveled at the rich, intricate carving. He had no doubt about the fragment's Viking origins.

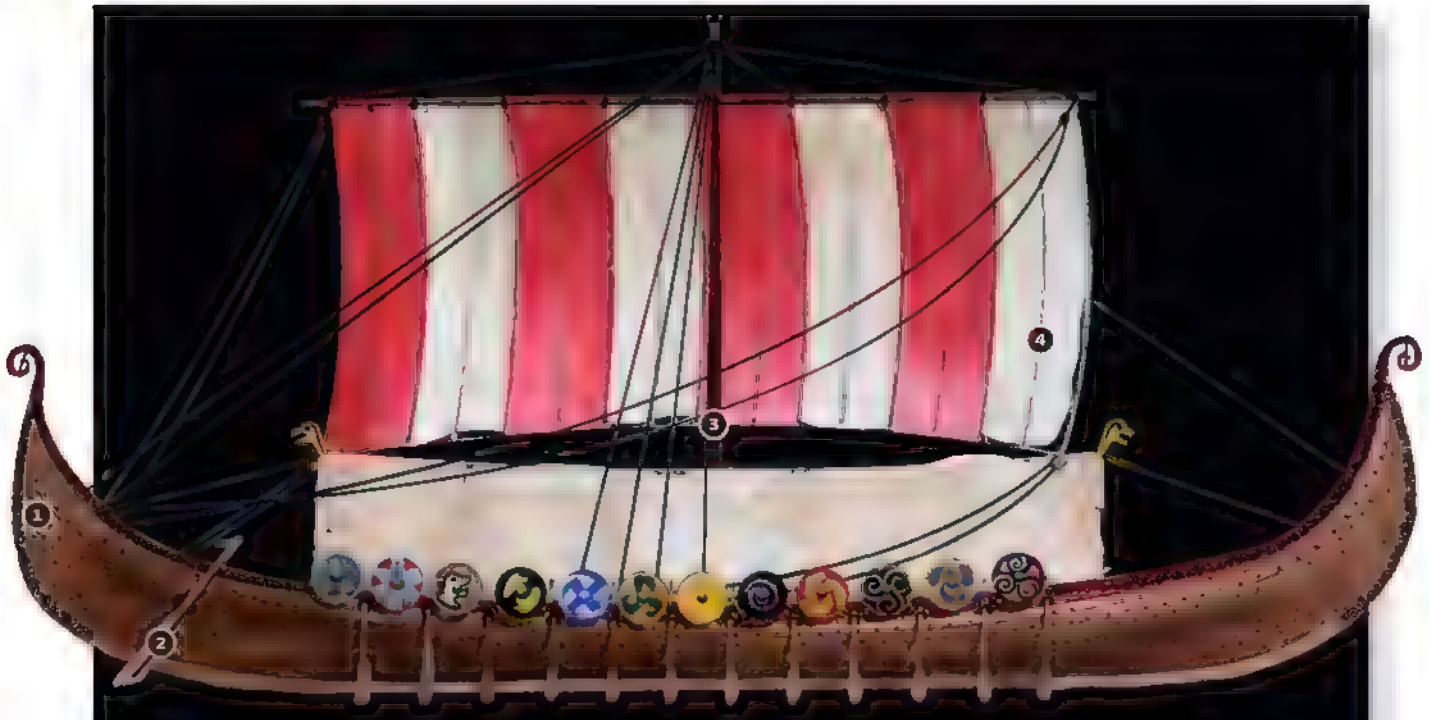
The very next day the professor went to Oseberg and explored the mound to evaluate the site. On August 10, 1903, he informed the Norwegian press that a significant, new Viking burial ship had been found. Despite the fortune-teller's predictions, Knut Rom, not Hansen, turned out to be the beneficiary of the treasure hunt: Rom received 12,000 Norwegian kroner ($1,400) for the land—a considerable sum of money at the time.

(continued on page 94)

DEATH SPIRAL

THE OSEBERG SHIP is on display in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo. Built of oak around A.D. 820, the craft is especially noteworthy for its spiral-shaped prow, carved in the form of a serpent's head. There are no signs that the vessel ever went to sea, so it is believed that its sole use was funereal.

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO



1 Hull Sporting a keel of 70 feet, the light, narrow boat was only 16 feet wide. The planks were fixed into place over oak ribs.

2 Oars A set of oars ran along each side. The steering oar was always on the right, the "steerboard," or starboard, side.

3 Mast Some 32 feet high, the mast rose from the center of the vessel, where it was mounted on sturdy oak blocks.

4 Sail Measuring more than 900 square feet, the sail could be quickly stowed to allow for rapid deployment of the oars.

Puzzle of the Primary Purpose

IT IS NOT KNOWN for sure why the Oseberg ship was first built. Was it originally intended to be a royal pleasure craft or a working ship? According to the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, Norway, where it is now on display, scholars believe that the Oseberg ship may have been built somewhere in western Norway around 820. However, the Oseberg ship's design calls to mind vessels intended for different purposes. The design closely resembles that of a typical working Viking ship above, which could be powered by either sails or oars, but no solid evidence exists to show the boat ever went to sea.

SNAKE HEAD THE RESTORED PROW OF THE OSEBERG SHIP ENDS IN A STYLIZED SERPENT'S HEAD AND IS RICHLY CARVED WITH INTRICATE INTERLINKING VIKING MOTIFS

Alerted to the presence of a Viking ship at the Oseberg farm in summer 1903, Professor Gustafson traveled to Oslo to the site, where a preliminary dig suggested a royal burial. Poor weather forced Gustafson and his team to wait until the following May to get back to work.

What connects a Welsh cathedral with the Zulu heartland of Durban?

The Welsh are famously fine singers and regardless of faith it is wonderfully uplifting to visit Brecon Cathedral in Wales and hear its celebrated choir perform. As the melodious notes soar to the rafters one's eye may be drawn to the majestic array of military standards that hangs there and in particular to a framed faded flag. This is the Queen's Colour of Britain's First Battalion of the 24th Regiment of Foot, the South Wales Borderers, and its fragile condition speaks to the dramatic events that link this small Welsh town with what is now the Zulu heartland of Durban in South Africa.

In 1879 Durban was the capital of the British colony of Natal, part of the vast empire ruled over by Queen Victoria. To tighten the crown's grip on this resource-rich region some of Britain's colonial officials deliberately provoked a war with Natal's neighbor, the powerful and independent kingdom of the Zulus. It was a war the British assumed they would win easily, pitching European rifles and artillery against spears and shields. But at the Battle of Isandlwana, around 100 miles north of Durban, British pride was dealt a bloody blow.

As the British Army advanced into Zululand a 2,000-strong contingent made camp beneath the looming lion-shaped hill of Isandlwana. While the main British force chased after rumored sightings of the enemy, some 20,000 swift footed Zulu warriors outmaneuvered them to attack the encampment. Ill-informed and poorly prepared, the British defenders, mostly the First Battalion of the 24th Regiment of Foot and a large local colonial contingent, formed up as best they could. Both sides fought ferociously but the Zulu's overwhelming numbers and relentless attacks enabled them to surround the camp and squeeze it. As its ammunition ran out the British defenses collapsed and the few survivors frantically tried to escape along the nearby river.

The Queen's Colour of the First Battalion of the 24th Regiment of Foot now hangs in Brecon Cathedral, Wales.

PHOTO FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE REGIMENTAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL WELSH, BRECON

It was amid such confusion that Lieutenant Melvill seized the Queen's Colour, the regiment's most prized possession, and rode hard toward the river in a desperate attempt to save it. The river was swollen from heavy rains and Melvill only made it half way across before being swept from his horse. Clinging to a rock and clutching the colour, he was rescued by a Lieutenant Coghill who helped him swim to the bank. But the churning water was too strong and the exhausted Melvill lost his grip on the precious flag, which was carried off by the strong current. Melvill and Coghill died later that same day but both received Britain's most prestigious military honor, the Victoria Cross, for their efforts to save the Queen's Colour.

It's that very flag, that now hangs from the cathedral rafters. It washed up downriver ten days after the battle and was carried home to the regiment's headquarters in Brecon. To those who know the story the flag serves as a fascinating reminder of how history can forever link people as far apart as Durban and the valleys of Wales.

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The lion-shaped hill of Isandlwana still dominates the battlefield today.

Everyday Luxuries for Beyond the Grave
THE TWO WOMEN were buried in the ship along with a vast number of personal objects, ranging from shoes and combs to beds, sleighs, and sculptures. The objects show the high levels of artistic refinement and practical comfort in the daily life of the Viking elite, who were determined to maintain their status even after death.
Wooden bed, just over five feet long, with bedposts in the form of stylized animal heads
One of four finely carved sleighs used for land travel and camping
Wooden carving of a mythological scene featuring Loki, the god of trickery and chaos
Dragon-shaped post with floral and animal decorations
WERNER FORMAN/ESTATE (CARVING); EIRIK IRGENS JOHNSEN/UNIVERSITY OF OSLO (SLEIGH); ALBUM/AKG (BED); DAN HOLST/UNIVERSITY OF OSLO (POST)

Digging in the Dirt

The excavation began the following spring. The burial mound, 130 feet wide and 19 feet high, had been built with blue clay and stones covered with turf found in local marshlands. This protective layer had provided the ideal conditions to preserve wood, which explains why the Oseberg ship's condition was better than the vessel found in Gokstad. The weight of the earth, however, had crushed the structure and its contents. Experts took years to put all the parts back together.

After excavation, the ship measured 70 feet long and 16 feet wide. It had been placed with the prow facing the sea. The funeral chamber itself was in the stern, constructed from wood that has been dated to A.D. 834. Gustafson realized the tomb had been looted, probably soon after the burial. The thieves entered through the prow, broke into the tomb, and stole what is thought now to have been the most valuable grave goods, scattering the bones in the process.

The most recent studies indicate that these bones belonged to two women: one around 70 years old and the other much younger, about 50. There was immediate speculation about their identity: Some believed one of the women could be Queen Åsa, the grandmother of Harald I (A.D 860-940), the first king of a united Norway. Others believed one of the women was a high priestess. Whoever they were, their rich attire indicated that they held an important position in Viking society.

It is believed that one—it is not known whom—was probably sacrificed to accompany the higher ranking person in her long journey beyond the grave.

Apart from the ship itself, the grave goods that had been left undisturbed included objects for everyday use: beds, tapestries, clothes, combs, farming tools, and tents. There was also a cart, along with the remains of 15 horses, 6 dogs, and 2 cows. The tomb was furnished with everything the deceased might need as they boarded their richly carved vessel for its last, mysterious voyage into the world of the dead.

—Verónica Walker

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THE OLYMPICS: A PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

TODAY THE OLYMPICS represents the pinnacle of amateur athletic competition, but the event has an ancient tradition of allowing professional athletes to compete for prizes. Many of the participants at the games in Olympia in the fifth century B.C. were rewarded by their city-states, which paid handsomely for victories. Whether wrestlers (like those depicted here on a relief from 510 B.C.) or runners, ancient athletes could expect more than glory for their triumphs.

KING LOUIS XVI MEETS *LA GUILLOTINE*

EVEN AFTER the storming of the Bastille in 1789, few suspected that France's revolutionaries would go so far as to execute the king. Following his failed attempt to escape France, however, the captured Louis XVI—now known as plain Louis Capet—was put on trial. The great spectacle began in 1792, and Louis's fate at the guillotine was sealed by a majority vote. France's neighboring powers trembled, and European history was never the same again.

G.TRES

The Royal Wedding of Ramses II

Ramses' sumptuous wedding in 1245 B.C. was a canny move: His bride was a princess of the Hittite Empire, with which Egypt had just signed a highly beneficial peace treaty.

David and Goliath

To defeat the Philistines in the famous biblical tale, the shepherd David topples the giant Goliath, a story that has come to symbolize the Israelites' unification under one king.

Rome's Unlikeliest Emperor

Derided for his physical defects, the studious Claudius lay low to survive the carnage of Caligula, dramatically emerging from the shadows as Rome's all-powerful ruler.

Power Struggle

In the late 19th century two brilliant inventors, Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla, battled over the best electric system to light up the future: direct current or alternating current.

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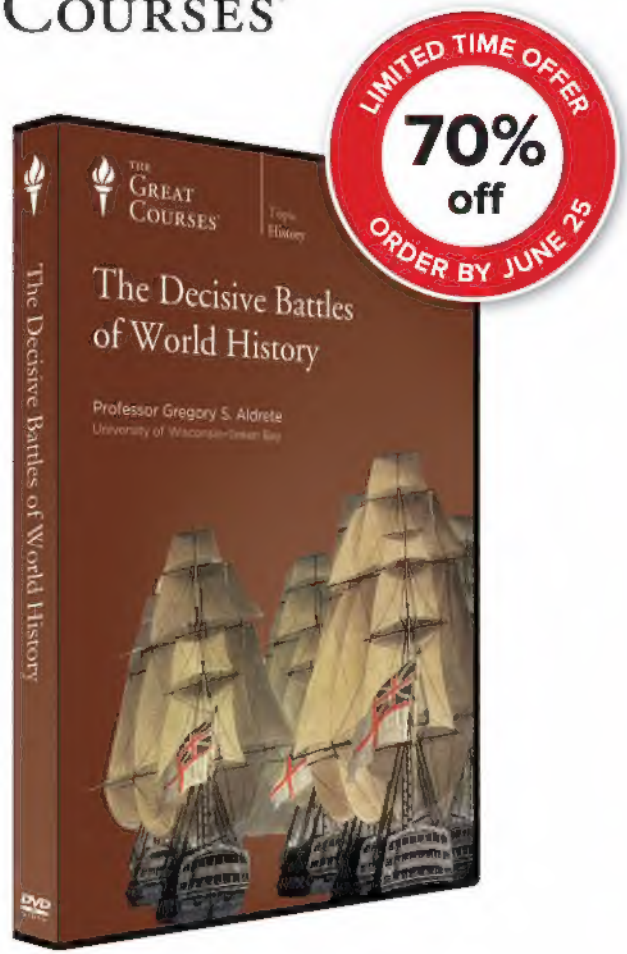

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